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THE PINOCHET PROJECT: A NATION'S SEARCH FOR TRUTH MEMORY STRUGGLES IN POST-PINOCHET CHILE

Christine Mehta

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THE PINOCHET PROJECT: A NATION'S SEARCH FOR TRUTH

MEMORY STRUGGLES IN POST-PINOCHET CHILE

www.christinemehta.com

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors
Program at Syracuse University

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Honors

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Honors Capstone Project in: International Relations and Journalism

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“The Chilean version of struggles over collective memory is worth telling in its own right. It is a dramatic story, filled with heroism and disappointment on matters of life and death. It is a story of moral consciousness, as human beings attempted to understand and to convince compatriots of the meaning of a great and unfinished trauma and its ethical and political implications.”-Steve Stern, Reckoning with Pinochet

ABSTRACT

Chile has fought for 21 years to overcome General Augusto Pinochet's violent legacy, but moving past the pervasive influence of Pinochet's 17-year reign is a difficult task, even today. The following work is an investigation on memory, and Chile's struggle to come to terms with its memory of the dictatorship. The key questions asked are: How do Chileans remember the dictatorship? What does each individual's memory mean to the collective whole? Why is confronting the past important to Chile's future?

The investigation is divided into two parts: a journalistic portion in which individual accounts are highlighted, and an academic thesis recounting Chile's memory journey from the fall of the dictatorship to the present, and analyzing the implications of Chile's continued memory struggle in the 21st century. The first-person narratives add a rich, human aspect to the ideological struggle within Chile. The personal interviews and narratives are published online at www.christinemehta.com, and provide a foundation for the argument constructed in the thesis.

Chileans have tried to forget. Former torture centers are now office buildings, and the national soccer team practices on the field where political prisoners once stumbled blindfolded to interrogation rooms. Chileans say, "We have better things to worry about, like recovering from the earthquake." But in the midst of economic and social progress, the Chileans are forgetting one thing too many: the consequences of forgetting for the next generation.

The generation that lived through the dictatorship is divided within itself in how it remembers the years of oppression: there are some that remember it fondly as Chile's entry onto the world stage as an economic force; others remember the terror and death, and still others prefer not to remember at all. Between the division and tension created by a fractured national memory, Chile has become, in many respects, a politically muted society.

Today, that silence has indirect consequences: apathy and disengagement in young people. In Chile's last election, just 9.2 percent of Chileans, 18-29 years old, voted. They say their disillusionment with politics stems from the failure of their elders to address the lingering policies left behind by Pinochet, policies that fail to represent their generation. To the younger generation, memory struggles and Pinochet's regime are issues of the older generation. They have not realized that the problems of their parents are becoming their problems as well. Their attitude is an indirect result, coupled with other factors, of the previous generation's reluctance to confront their own memories of the dictatorship and educate the younger generation about a past they feel disconnected from and fail to understand.

Using interviews, information from contemporary media, the work of Chilean memory expert, Steve Stern, a professor of history at University of Wisconsin-Madison, and dozens of archival documents found in Chile's

libraries and universities, I have constructed a picture of the state of Chilean memory politics today.

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PREFACE

When I first envisioned *The Pinochet Project*, I struggled with a way to bring life to my potentially abstract and complex topic: the memory of a nation. Memory is not objective or concrete. I knew I would not be dealing with facts, but rather recollections, emotions and tattered shreds of “facts” that tread a fine line between fact and fiction. The title--*The Pinochet Project: A Nation’s Search for Truth*—is a testament to the ongoing quest to define a collective truth in a divided nation.

I felt that the only way I could effectively tell the Chilean people’s story about their experience of the dictatorship and their journey to recovery was by giving a voice to the individual. Academic analysis alone would exclude the rich, first-person narratives I encountered in my own journey to understand how Chilean opinion of General Pinochet, his government, and how the lingering effects of his regime continue to appear in Chilean politics and society today. I have dubbed my approach “narrative academia,” or if you prefer, “academic journalism.” I have combined journalistic methods with academic ones to give life and breath to my work, and a human face to an abstract issue.

The first-person narratives complement an analysis drawn from my observations and interviews on-the-ground, contemporary news media, as well as social and political theory, including works by Chilean memory expert, Steve Stern.

A single conversation with a Chilean family in 2009 inspired me to allow individual Chilean voices tell their own stories, both throughout my analysis, and through online, news-style profiles.

On a Sunday afternoon in April of 2009, I sat down to lunch with a Chilean family, with whom I was living at the time, burning with new knowledge of terror and torture that had occurred in their city just 20 years ago. I told the family about the trip to the torture center called la Villa Grimaldi, and the grim man that took us through the very site where he was once tortured. Nauseated by the graphic details of torture methods used on political prisoners, I fought to understand this new, perverse side of human nature that I had never fully realized existed before. "Have you been to la Villa Grimaldi?" I asked the three daughters, ages 16, 19 and 22. "Is it something you do as a class trip in high school or something?"

Maca, the oldest, looked confused. "I've actually never heard of it before now," she said.

Surprised, I looked over at my host father, Roberto, who casually buttered a slice of bread before remarking, "Well, you know, I was tortured in the National Stadium in 1973."

Silence.

He popped the piece of bread into his mouth.

What followed was a three-hour conversation about Roberto's experience and his memory of Pinochet's regime.

I asked him later, why he had refused up to that day to tell his daughters the full story about his imprisonment. “Some things are better left forgotten,” he said. “They serve no purpose to remember. It creates too much conflict to talk about it.”

After that day, I became obsessed with the concept of ignoring the past. Was Roberto right? How can someone possibly forgive and forget imprisonment and torture? Doesn't an experience so horrific forever define that person?

I recounted the story to a Pakistani graduate student from Stanford at a conference in Syracuse. We had just emerged from a small-group discussion with Khaled Hosseini, the author of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. She was conducting a similar project in Pakistan but lamented the fact that so few people would actually read her more than 100-page thesis.

“I love Khaled Hosseini's work because he brings to light important issues in a way that is powerful and meaningful to everyone. I wish I could write like that,” she said.

Her words stayed with me. I began to mull over ways I might make my work accessible to the people who would benefit, both in Chile and the U.S. I decided to take myself out of the picture as much as possible and let the Chileans tell their own story.

I developed the idea of “narrative academia,” or using journalistic methods to tell an academic story. Therefore, the following work is a

combination of traditional research, digging through history archives in Chile, personal interviews and original reporting on the ground.

Part One is an analysis based on the work done by Steve Stern in the early to mid-1990s about historical memory in Chile. Part Two is a series of articles that feature the most intriguing characters I met and interviewed in Chile. My work, unlike Stern's, is based solely on interviews I conducted in Santiago, therefore the impressions and conclusions I drew are based exclusively on the information I gathered from the urban population. Stern traveled through Chile to gain other perspectives. I sought, however, to provide a fair and accurate description of the experience of Santiago residents during and after the dictatorship. The Santiago metropolitan region is home to more than half of Chile's total population and most political and economic power is concentrated in the capital.

I looked for unique angles in my interviews with subjects and attempted to compile stories that shed a different perspective on the state of post-dictatorship, democratic Chile, a country that has, in every appearance, healed but still plagued by Pinochet's memory in unexpected ways.

I view academia as the pursuit of knowledge and journalism as the means to distribute that knowledge. With my work, I hoped to go further than simply analyzing Chile's collective memory, but put the country's experience into a context that is accessible and compelling to everyone.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the support and counsel of my two advisers, Professors Gladys McCormick and Mauricio Paredes.

Professor Paredes provided me with invaluable contacts and thought-provoking feedback during my research phase in Santiago last summer. Professor McCormick helped shape the project into a cohesive written thesis and challenged me to take my argument to higher levels as I developed my conclusions.

I would like to thank Professor Steve Davis for editing the articles appearing on the website and for his support of this project from beginning to end. Special thanks also to Bradley Turner, for his editing contributions and tireless enthusiasm for discussing Chile with me; Jeff Passetti, for his web design and programming counsel; and finally thanks to everyone who discussed this project with me, especially Gladys McCormick's HST 401 seminar class on Latin America and political violence. Each conversation helped shape the final product into what it is today.

ADVICE TO FUTURE HONORS STUDENTS

Here's the one obvious but key bit of advice I can give...stick with your passion.

A well-done Capstone project will involve more than a year of your life, and it's essential to stay excited about the project you execute, even as Turn-In Day approaches. I stumbled across my project rather than looked for it, and trusted that the genuine interest I held in the subject would come together as a cohesive project. And it did.

In today's society, nearly everything has been written or researched about by somebody, somewhere, so finding something original is difficult. Keep in mind that yes, your idea may have been done in some form by somebody before you, but it's never been done by YOU, and that is important. Think how you can build upon previous research and conclusions to form a fresh angle on the issue you research.

Remember, if you feel true conviction and passion for your project, the project you complete will be unique just by virtue of the intensive time and effort you put into it.

So, keep your eyes open early for ideas and experiences that will spark your creative juices, and good luck!

Part One

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

General Augusto Pinochet: the name provokes a wide spectrum of emotions in Chile. Chileans' reactions to hearing his name range from anger and horror, to passionate support. Besides evoking strong emotion, the mention of Pinochet also causes a curious *aversion* to the subject altogether in many Chileans, from victims of state-wielded terror to those who worked for Pinochet's regime.

Based on dozens of interviews and individual recollections, the following work is divided into two parts. First, Part One is an academic analysis of the role memory plays in Chilean society and politics, and why it matters for the future of the Chilean people. Part Two is an introduction to the material published online featuring the individual recollections of Chileans woven together to form journalism-style. Two stories are included in print form, and the others can be found on www.christinemehta.com. The interviews featured in the narratives provide a foundation and emotional link for the audience and the arguments discussed in the following body of work. The concept employed to tie together the academic and the narrative is the idea of "academic journalism," or using journalistic methods to tell an academic story. Providing a human face to an abstract idea such as memory allows a broader audience to access the ideas discussed in the work and brings a rich, personal aspect to the analysis.

II. GENERAL PINOCHET'S MEMORY

Regardless of whether General Pinochet is feared, disdained, or admired, he is one of the most controversial and influential figures of modern Chilean political history. Condemned by the international community both during and after his regime (1973-1990), he is a complex topic within Chile. Instated through a CIA-backed military coup, General Pinochet cast his military arm over all aspects of Chilean society. His memory, and what his regime represented, continues to cause conflict in Chilean society between the conservative and liberal political camps, and between those who celebrated his arrival and his victims. Understanding the complicated nature of Chile's collective memory requires understanding the political ideologies dominating Chile at the time, and the political ideology thriving in Chile today.

Before September 11, 1973, Chile had enjoyed a long tradition of stable democracy; the fall of democracy was unthinkable to Chileans. The Cold War and the polarization of domestic political landscape changed that. The political spectrum shifted to the left as working-class Chileans and students, enchanted by the fervor of the Cuban Revolution and disillusioned by the economic inequities in Chile, called for social reform. Set against the background of the Cold War, communist rhetoric gave the reformists in Chile new, more potent language as they clamored for change. The left appeared to have won in 1970, when the popular and working-class supported Unidad Popular candidate, Salvador Allende, won the presidency.

The instability and chaos that ensued as a result of Allende's poor economic policies further polarized Chileans until finally, on Sept. 11, 1973, tensions exploded in a military-instigated coup in the heart of Santiago, the bombing of the presidential palace, establishment of military rule, and President Allende's last stand and violent death, potentially by suicide.

The Chilean military claimed that their intervention "saved Chile from a freefall into Communism."

With support from the United States and the Nixon administration, the military coup, led by General Augusto Pinochet, was the culmination of both domestic unrest and CIA intervention designed to unseat Allende and his socialist policies from power. The Allende years, although characterized by a period of intellectual freedom and working class empowerment, were chaotic for all Chileans. Along with empowerment of the poor came economic free-fall, food rationing and persecution of private companies and the wealthy elite. For many Chileans, especially the traditionally wealthy, Pinochet represented salvation from Communism and a return to prosperity. For others, the fall of Allende's government and his death (ruled at the time to be a suicide, but the case was reopened in 2011) invoked an ominous sense of foreboding.

These debates have defined an entire generation of Chileans. Those born after 1990, however, find the subject old, tired, and removed from their lives. They have no personal memories of the dictatorship, and the issues debated by their parents and grandparents hold little to no relevance for

them. Education about the era is scant in public high schools, and far from wishing to learn more about the dictator and his impact on their society, many young Chileans wish Pinochet's memory and lingering policies would truly disappear, instead of lurking on the fringes of every social, religious or political conversation¹.

Shortly after the September 11 coup, people began to disappear. The period between 1973-1978 was the most violent of the dictatorship as Pinochet sought to rout his opposition. Rumors of torture centers, quiet in the wealthy social circles of Chile's upper-class, a fact of life for the working poor living in Santiago's *poblaciones*, or slums, began to circulate and a culture of mutual suspicion and fear set in, subduing the passionate political debate that flowed so freely in the decade before. Members of leftist groups, including the *Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Left Movement, MIR)², free-thinking scholars, and Allende supporters were taken by authorities for interrogation in the name of rooting out the "enemy," or Communists, in other words. Many of them were never seen again, joining the growing number of *desaparecidos* (disappeared) who characterized the brutal Latin American dictatorships, including Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, in the second half of the 20th century.

¹ Barrionuevo, Alexei. (2009, December 12). Chile's 'Children of Democracy Sitting Out Presidential Election. *New York Times*. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com

² A Chilean political party and leftist movement that preached direct action and preparation for armed guerilla struggle; formed in the late 1960s. www.mir-chile.cl

Despite blatant crimes against humanity and condemnation from the international community, a large number of Chileans, both wealthy and middle-class, maintain that Pinochet raised Chile out of the dust and transformed it into the Latin American economic power it is today. For Pinochet supporters, his oppressive methods were justified in order to keep the Communist threat at bay, and in averting civil war³. The right dismisses abuse and torture claims as lies or exaggeration from the leftist “terrorist” factions attempting to undermine Pinochet and the capitalist system.

Even after the dictatorship fell, Chile’s transition to democracy was restrained and muted. Continued support for Pinochet, combined with unwillingness to examine the past too closely, jarred the celebrations for reinstated democracy. The majority of Chileans had learned to be silent observers, hurrying about their daily lives wary and worried about their every move, refusing to speak or act out against the dictatorship for fear of losing a job...or a life. Chileans sought to protect their families through conformity rather than complicity. That restraint and aversion to political involvement has carried through to today’s Chile.

That aversion to involvement is the struggle Chileans experienced on a daily basis during the dictatorship. Turning a blind eye to tear gas being sprayed on protesting university students, or pretending not to hear the screams coming from a nearby office building-turned-torture center was the

³ Vial, G. (2005). *Salvador Allende: El Fracaso de Una Ilusion*. Santiago, Chile: Universidad de Finis Terrae. Reference.

mark of the fear felt by Chileans at the time, and the power of fear to separate a person from his, or her, moral compass.

German-born Jewish philosopher, Hannah Arendt, commented on the power of totalitarian governments to “dominate” a human being by stripping away the “juridical person,” the “moral person,” and finally “kill a man’s individuality.” Stripping away the components that constitute a unique, free and moral individual is the cornerstone action critical to the totalitarian government’s maintenance of power⁴. “Totalitarian terror,” she wrote, “achieved its most terrible triumph when it succeeded in cutting the moral person off from the individualist escape and making the decisions of the conscience absolutely questionable and equivocal” (Arendt, 13).

Even if Pinochet failed to achieve a true totalitarian government on the scale of Nazism or Stalinism, he succeeded in wielding their tool: totalitarian terror. Arendt based her argument on Nazi Germany and the goal of the concentration camps as tools of “total domination,” a case that cannot be directly compared to Pinochet’s dictatorship. Pinochet’s regime differed from what Arendt identified as a “totalitarian movement” in several fundamental ways, but his government and methods of oppressing Chilean society were borrowed in part from the methods used by Hitler and Stalin and their totalitarian movements of the 20th century.

⁴ Arendt, H. (1973). *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (2nd ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. (Original work published 1951). Page 13. Arendt's work increased and broadened my understanding of the nature of the Chilean dictatorship and its methods for wielding totalitarian terror.

Pinochet used torture, for example, as a tool to intimidate, dominate, and create an overarching culture of mutual suspicion, another term defined by Arendt, to justify his government. To legitimize his claim to power, Pinochet created an invented war with an imaginary enemy that gave the illusion of instability in order to ensure that the Chilean people would not question the need for a military government to guarantee safety, security and deliverance from the Communist threat.

Mutual suspicion and suppressed expression did not step down with Pinochet in 1990, an insurmountable divide continued to exist in Chilean society, even between families and friends living on opposite sides of what the Chilean filmmaker, Patricio Gúzman, termed Chile's "fractured soul."

Chile's memories simmered beneath the surface until General Pinochet was arrested in London in 1998, upsetting the long-held conviction that Pinochet was untouchable and would never be held accountable for crimes he may, or may not have in the perspective of some, committed. His arrest served as the much-needed impetus for dialogue among Chileans. Furthermore, his arrest finally freed the victims of some of their fear to speak out against the human rights violations they experienced under Pinochet. The international community legitimized the memory of those who suffered under the dictatorship by arresting Pinochet, and dialogue began to open gradually between Chilean citizens, slowly and reluctantly, but at least present in the public forum.

Chile's memory, and its influence on Chilean politics, civil society, and foreign policy, remains a question resolved for some, and an open wound for others. In creating a future unfettered by the past, Chile faces an important question of addressing memory's place in modern-day politics and society.

IV. THE STAGNANT SEARCH

Modern-day Chile has reached an impasse in healing its "fractured soul" and solving the memory question that has haunted the country since the fall of the dictatorship. Patricio Guzman first coined the concept of the "fractured soul" in his epic documentary "The Battle of Chile," a six-hour documentary of the events leading up to and including the storming of the presidential palace on Sept. 11, 1973. Steve Stern articulated the idea in his short analysis on Guzman's film in 2010 saying, "It is as if the drive for justice in the late 20th century led to the great fracturing of a cultural fiction once popular in mid-century: the idea of a united national soul or people"⁵. Mid-century Chile was characterized by both stability and a robust discussion of political and social ideologies. Argument and fervent debate characterized Chilean culture before the start of the Cold War, and anti-Communist rhetoric began to creep into the Chilean social fabric. Stern says with his statement that the radicalism that took precedence beginning in the late 1960s

⁵ Stern, S. J. (2010, March). Filming the Fractured Soul of Chile: Guzmán's Epic and Elegy of Revolution. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 43(2), 40-45. Chile's "fractured soul" first appears captured in Patricio Guzmán's documentary "La Batalla de Chile," and "Memoria Obstinate." Stern analyses the effect of Guzmán's work on the collective memory of modern-day Chile.

“fractured” Chile, and perhaps permanently erased the notion that the memory and soul of the Chilean people will ever be united again.

Chile now faces a challenge different from that of the mid-1990s when forgetting and “oblivion” prevailed. Today, Chileans must address the long-term and indirect consequences perpetrated by the 17 years of oppression and subsequent decade of failure to wholly embrace its historical memory and encourage dialogue between those living on opposite sides of the memory divide. Avoidance has created ambivalence. Many Chileans are proud of their ambivalence and view the memory question, and those groups involved documenting and discussing the memory of the dictatorship, as an anachronism. They view human rights and Pinochet as tired subjects eaten away at the edges by overly zealous human rights advocates dedicated to keeping the memories of those lost in the public eye.

“There is no story here,” said Roberto Soto⁶, a 53 year-old Santiago banker who was imprisoned and tortured for 10 months in 1973. “All that needs to be said has been said. There is no need to discuss it anymore.” He never felt the need to share his experience with his daughters. “Why do they need to know the details?” he said. “I don’t want my daughters to know.”

The ambivalent, however, are unwittingly Pinochet’s legacy. A reluctance to stir passion, participation or controversy is both Pinochet’s legacy and form of “permanent dictatorship.” Avoiding examining the past

⁶ Interview with Roberto Soto, April 2009. Soto was imprisoned by the Pinochet’s secret police, the DINA, in 1973 in the National Stadium and tortured before being sent to a concentration camp in Antofagasta (northern Chile) for 10 months.

has begun to foreshadow ramifications for the future, namely a deep-seated mistrust of the government and any state institution. By 2000-2001, the political climate was already beginning to shift. Forty-four percent of Chileans had been too young during the Allende and early military regime years to remember the struggle. Another 28.5 percent were under the age of 15, meaning they hardly remembered the dictatorship at all. For young adults in 2000-2001, the struggles under Pinochet were becoming, as Stern phrases it, “the cultural habit of one’s elders, not a common-sense experience of one’s own”⁷. In other words, Pinochet is history, not real life.

A survey conducted in 2000 showed that Chileans between the ages of 15 and 29 were tired of the human rights struggles. Those same youths thought that Chilean society “unjust,” as in “discriminatory,” and “classist,” but still eschewed the human rights topic⁸. Young Chileans failed, and are still failing, to see how their past and present are linked. They might see the memory question as the domain of their elders, rather than as defining and contextualizing today’s problems. Even in 2000, weariness with the human rights issue was indicative of a disinterest in political and civic life⁹.

If voter registration represents interest in political and civic life, Chilean youth have become even more removed since 2000. In 2000, only 38 percent of Chileans aged 18-29 registered to vote. In 2010, that percentage

⁷ Stern, S. J. *Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations: Reckoning with Pinochet* (W. D. Mignolo, I. Silverblatt, & S. Saldivar-Hull, Eds. 2010) 263.

⁸ Stern, S.J. 264.

⁹ Stern, S.J. 467.

dwindled to a mere 9.2 percent, when Sebastian Piñera ran for president¹⁰. Besides expressing aversion to politics and a government they say is “corrupt,” young Chileans said to the New York Times in 2009 that the voting system was one set up by Pinochet, and “limits their freedom of expression and discourages them from registering”¹¹. Chile’s voting system requires citizens to register for their lifetime and, once registered, they are required to vote, or pay a fine, at each election.

Although Chileans attempt to shut away Pinochet and his memory, he keeps cropping up in unexpected ways, like youth voter apathy. Clearly, his memory and his lingering policies need to be addressed.

III. BY THE NUMBERS: THE OFFICIAL SEARCH

Since the fall of Pinochet, Chilean society has battled with the memory question, pulling it into the open and firmly shutting it away, depending upon the year. During the early years of democratic transition, President Patricio Aylwin understood the need for Chile to recognize the human rights atrocities and heal from within. He recognized the need for the government to acknowledge the wrongs done to the people by the state and military. Despite opposition from his advisers, Aylwin demonstrated that he knew the paramount importance of mounting an investigation into the atrocities committed by the state during the dictatorship. The Truth Commission he appointed was admittedly limited in scope in his attempt to maintain

¹⁰ Barrionuevo, 2009.

¹¹ Barrionuevo, 2009.

moderation between the memory “camps,” or the groups on each side of the memory divide, and appease the military, which remained largely unapologetic for its “excesses” during the regime.

The exact number of victims tortured, killed, exiled, or disappeared by Pinochet’s regime is still hotly debated. The Vicaría de la Solidaridad¹² was one of the only organizations to attempt tracking the number of victims during the dictatorship. When President Patricio Aylwin, the first democratically elected president after Pinochet stepped down in 1990, commissioned the Rettig Report, the Vicaría already had records of 2,354 individual cases of death or disappearance under military rule, and their count of political arrests was 82,429. The Vicaría also estimated in 1990 that nearly 400,000 people were exiled during the military regime¹³. Official government reports, however, published much lower numbers. For example, Aylwin severely limited the mandate of the original truth commission to only include cases of death, disappearance, or torture leading to death. The first truth commission, nicknamed the “Rettig Report” and published in 1991, estimated that 2,279 people were killed or disappeared during the dictatorship¹⁴. A later truth commission, known as the “Valech Commission,”

¹² A church-affiliated, nongovernmental organization dedicated to upholding the rights and giving assistance to victims of human rights violations and their families during the Pinochet regime. It was founded in 1973 the wake of the creation of the *Comité de Cooperación para la Paz en Chile*. *Sala Virtual Vicaría de la Solidaridad*. Retrieved from: Arzobispado de Santiago Fundación Documentación y Archivo de la Vicaría de la Solidaridad website: <http://www.archivovicaria.cl/inicio.htm>

¹³ Stern, S.J. *Latin American Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations: Reckoning with Pinochet* (W.D. Mignolo, I. Silverblatt, & S. Saldivar-Hull, Eds. 2010) 68.

¹⁴ Rettig, R., Castillo, J., Cea, J. L., Jiménez de la Jara, M.,

investigated how many cases of torture there were under the regime. The Valech Report, published in 2004, estimated that 33,221 people were detained, and of that number, 27,255 were tortured¹⁵. It upheld the Rettig Commission's addition to its original number of dead and disappeared—the final number totaled 3,197¹⁶.

The short time frame allotted for the Rettig Report investigation limited the number of cases the Commission could analyze, but Aylwin was anxious to confront the human rights violations head-on saying, “delay only disrupted the path to healing and forgiveness.”¹⁷

In fact, the Truth Commission was just one part of a larger set of initiatives that sought to harmonize the neoliberal economic principles left behind by Pinochet and his economic advisers, with the social needs of Chile's people during the democratic transition that had been ignored by Pinochet and the military. ¹⁸Aylwin shifted Chile's focus from international

Martin, R., Novoa, L., . . . Zalaquett, J. (1991, April 25). *Informe de la Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación* [The National Truth and Reconciliation Report].

¹⁵ Some human rights advocates claim that Gonzalo Vial, a conservative historian, changed certain passages in the Rettig Report so that the total count was much lower than original reports suggested. *La Memoria Viva*, a memory project website published a paper by scholar Fred Bennetts, called *La Falsificación de la Historia*. Bennetts says that a copy of a report issued in 1986 by the Comisión Chilena de Derechos Humanos (CCDH) detailing 89 disappearances in Chile's V Region (near Santiago), was given to the Rettig Commission. In the Rettig Report, the number of disappearances in the V Region is listed at just 29, instead of 89. His theory is not implausible. Some conservatives, as I observed in an interview with well-known *El Mercurio* columnist, Hermógenes Pérez de Arce, maintain that the number of deaths is much lower than the Rettig and Valech report. Pérez de Arce estimates that only 900 deaths occurred, and the majority happened almost exclusively on, or directly after, the coup on Sept. 11, 1973.

¹⁶ Valech, B. S., Sepúlveda, M., Amunátegui, M. L., Fouilloux, L., Gómez, J., Sierra, L., . . . Lira, E. (n.d.). *Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura*. Santiago, Chile: Chilean government: President Ricardo Lagos

¹⁷ Stern, S. J. 88.

¹⁸ Stern, S. J. 35.

to national, and returned priority status to domestic concerns rather than the international. With Argentina's turbulent recovery process in mind, Aylwin sought to avoid making the same mistakes as Argentina's president, Raúl Alfonsín. Alfonsín's truth commission process, unlike Aylwin's truth commission, the Rettig Report, was uninhibited and unrestricted, provoking a military rebellion in the late 1980s. The Argentine Truth Commission, however, is still regarded as one of the most thorough truth commissions in South America following a military regime¹⁹. Although the invasiveness of the Commission incited the Argentine military into rebellion, and therefore injecting fear and caution into Aylwin's democratic transitional government over a decade later, it surpassed the first Chilean report, which was limited in scope and failed to encompass the vast complexity of the crimes against humanity committed by the dictatorship.

While Aylwin successfully avoided military unrest and delivered a seemingly seamless transition to democracy, he unwittingly helped encourage the memory impasse that blocked Chile's healing process until the early 2000s.

In the early 1990s, Chilean society could be defined as valuing moderation. "Not too much," was the slogan of the day, according to Stern²⁰. The search for truth was tempered by an inherent desire to uncover only

¹⁹ Feitlowitz, M. *A Lexicon of Terror*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 1998) 13.

Feitlowitz's work provided information for a comparison to be drawn between Argentina's and Chile's respective transitions to democracy.

²⁰ Stern, S.J., *Reckoning with Pinochet*, 200.

what was deemed necessary at the time, and nothing more for fear of discovering “too much” about what may have happened during the dictatorship and had been swept under the rug. As a result of this mentality, Chile had reached a “memory impasse” by 1992. It was an impasse that would not begin to unravel until 1998. An impasse looks similar to Stern’s *olvido*, or closing of the memory box, but an “impasse” is distinct from a culture of oblivion, which entails closing the “memory box” and consciously “remembering to forget.” An impasse, rather, is something more complex altogether.

The impasse of the mid-1990s meant that the “cultural belief by a majority in the truth of cruel human rupture and persecution under dictatorship, and in the moral urgency of justice, unfolded alongside political belief that Pinochet, the military, and their social base of supporters and sympathizers remained too strong for Chile to take logical ‘next steps’ along the road of truth and justice. The result was not so much a culture of forgetting, as a culture that oscillated-as if caught in moral schizophrenia-between prudence and convulsion. To an extent, this was a ‘moving impasse.’” The conflict lay between the majority’s desire to remember and the minority’s power to control memory²¹. In Chile, those who held positions of power: the businessmen, the politicians, and the military are a wealthy and influential minority preferred to “turn the page” on Pinochet, and their power effectively blocked the majority from carrying out the next stages in

²¹ Stern, S. J. *Remembering Pinochet's Chile* xxix.

pursuing truth and justice for the victims of the dictatorship. The impasse was a result of cycles of memory struggle beginning in 1973, and was deeply entrenched in the politico-cultural values of Chilean society.

The impasse began to thaw slightly between 1998 and 2001 when Chile was once again caught between “prudence and convulsion.” Pinochet took up his office as lifetime senator in 1998, provoking demonstrations and protests at his oath-of-office ceremony, and this time, the Chilean people rose up more loudly than they had in the past²². Shortly after the protests at Pinochet’s oath-of-office ceremony, he was arrested in London, an event that was a crucial point in shaking the memory impasse. Pinochet’s detention in London in October 1998 was a classic “memory knot” according to Stern, which led to a release and flood of memory, discussion, and demand for justice unprecedented before 1998. Pinochet had fallen from untouchable to a potential criminal charged with crimes against humanity by the international community. The victims and human rights activists were vindicated and validated.

After Pinochet’s arrest, events quickly unfolded to address the memory question. Michelle Bachelet, herself a former victim of the regime and later president, dedicated funds and energy to constructing memorials, including the brand-new (as of 2010) *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos* (Museum of Memory and Human Rights). Unfortunately, the most dire consequence of the memory impasse has not been a reluctance in

²² Stern, S.J. *Reckoning with Pinochet*, 212.

today's society to discuss the dictatorship, but continued ambivalence toward the subject, by those who lived through the regime, and especially those born after the fall of Pinochet. The cycles of memory struggle and impasse have become entrenched in the fabric of Chilean society, weaving it with indifference and disdain for politics and memory. Chileans today ask themselves what every country asks after an incident of collective trauma: why does memory matter?

Throughout the 20th century, a pattern has evolved of totalitarian regimes and dictatorship gaining power through ideological radicalism in every region in the world. Each wave has been defined by a different ideology, but the methods and power structures have been suspiciously similar. The first wave was Nazism and racial elitism, then came anti-Communism and the "World of Light versus the World of Dark" ideology, and now anti-terrorism and the West versus an Islamic East. The cycles of ideological and political radicalism have taken on a new potency in the history of political violence, and cannot be prevented from repetition by memory awareness alone. Active engagement with memory, transmitting memory to the younger generation, and education about a nation's historical memory, especially regarding tangible and intangible conflict within a society (a conflict characteristic of dictatorships and totalitarian regimes), are the methods by which a nation's historical memory must be revived and simply...remembered.

V. THE MANY FACES OF TRUTH

Memory is not the answer to avoiding violence and radicalism, but memory can help us understand and discuss political violence through a new lens that allows for more flexibility than history's hard facts. Collective memory is one expression of history that complements and interprets facts, archives and historical text.

Memory is a cross-section between the political, social, and cultural spheres to create a new sphere of memory politics, a concept that has become more significant to countries in democratic transition from authoritarian rule. Academics, historians and documentarians such as the authors of "El Espacio Cultural," Stern and Patricio Guzman assert that Chile is "fractured in its political, cultural and memory identity"²³. Guzman and Stern maintain that Chile's fractured soul struggles to define its past as united memory, national memory, and one true version of events, where unity, patriotism and truth fail to exist²⁴. According to "El Espacio Cultural," political, social, and memory spheres are separate, and develop separately within the overarching framework of "culture"²⁵. In Chile, however, culture,

²³ Garretón, M. A., Martin-Barbero, J., Cavarozzi, M., Canclini, N. G., Ruíz-Giménez, *El Espacio Cultural Latinoamericano* G., & Stavenhagen, R. (2003) 25. This book discussed the idea of political integration and the obstacles to achieving that among Latin American countries. It also introduced the topic of dwindling political participation as a cultural phenomenon.

²⁴ Stern, S. J. (2010, March). Filming the Fractured Soul of Chile: Guzmán's Epic and Elegy of Revolution. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 43(2), 40-45. Chile's "fractured soul" first appears captured in Patricio Guzmán's documentary "La Batalla de Chile," and "Memoria Obstinada." Stern analyses the effect of Guzmán's work on the collective memory of modern-day Chile.

²⁵ Garretón, M. A., Martin-Barbero, J., Cavarozzi, M., Canclini, N. G., Ruíz-Giménez, 27.

politics, and memory overlap and intermingle inevitably. Many individuals that should fit neatly into one of Stern's memory frameworks in fact break out of his molds by mixing their traditionally parallel political and cultural identities (as defined by "El Espacio Cultural") in unlikely ways with unusual results that have made concrete, transformed and moved beyond what he proposed in his trilogy.

For example, after interviewing several people who fit the political and socioeconomic profiles for each of Stern's memory camps, I encountered a woman named Marcia Scantlebury. Described as a "*cuica*," or of high social standing, Scantlebury has a unique story. She was born into a conservative family but her sympathies, influenced by studying journalism at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, always ran to the left. She worked in association with the MIR as a "militant," which for her meant printing pamphlets, distributing anti-government propaganda, and other "subversive" actions. "Yes, I was certainly a militant," she said in surprise when asked whether the MIR was a "militant and armed" group before 1973 (as the Military Academy claimed in an interview), "but I never committed any violent acts and neither did anyone that I knew also working with MIR."

Today, Scantlebury is the director of TVN Chile, Chile's national television channel, and also was the brains behind Michelle Bachelet's government initiative to create the Museum of Memory and Human Rights. "I'm a socialist-militant even today," Scantlebury said. But for her, the word "militant" did not equate with "terrorist," the label slapped on her, and

activists like her, by directors at the Escuela Militar just a few weeks before. For Scantlebury, “militant” meant something more along the lines of “freedom fighter.”

Also setting Scantlebury apart is her analytical detachment from her political imprisonment and persecution that refuses to cross over into ambivalence. Unlike Ana Gonzalez and Luis Navarro, Scantlebury was able to detach herself from the emotional and mental pain associated with her imprisonment and torture in the early 1970s before she fled to live in exile in Colombia in 1976. She was able to remove herself from the ideological radicalism that defines Gonzalez’s and Navarro’s views and memory. Scantlebury advocates the need for memory and reconciliation, but differs from Navarro and Gonzalez in that she has not been so scarred by her experience as to dwell in the past. Although Scantlebury insists that she was never a *combatante* for the MIR, and therefore vehemently refutes the military academy’s and conservative’s claims that the 1973 coup was justified as a counter-terrorism measure, she concedes that there was “turbulence, secret shipments, and provocation from the U.S. to exacerbate all of the turbulence in Chile at that moment. So, the people went out into the streets to face the government. There was a very radical life that in the end it was difficult to speak with people that did not think the same as you. It was a country divided even between families, including my own.”

“Memory,” she said, “is far from a neutral space. It has become a cultural and political battlefield.”

Scantlebury's case indicates that Chile's memory struggles intertwine the political, cultural and social spheres, rather than maintain them as separate spaces as argued by "El Espacio Cultural en Latinoamerica."

Immediately after Pinochet's regime lost power, Stern spent two years in Chile and devised four emblematic memory frameworks upon which he based much of his subsequent memory arguments. He divided Chile's memory question into four emblematic frameworks: *memoria como salvación*, *memoria como una ruptura*, *memoria como persecución*, and *olvido*. In his first book, he analyzed each type of memory that existed in the years of early democratic transition using anecdotes of individuals whose individual memories represented a larger memory camp. *Memoria como salvación* he defined as the memory that favored the military coup and Pinochet's rule as a necessary measure to save the country from Communist chaos and economic ruin. Pinochet, to this sector of Chilean society (mainly businessmen, the wealthy, political conservatives, and the military), was the savior of the country. Today, this memory camp has dwindled to a small but insistent minority. Many, such as the Military Academy, maintain a careful façade of acknowledgement of the crimes against humanity committed by the regime, even teaching human rights to its cadets as a requirement, but the administration and history department still uses only the texts written by conservative historians, and insists that Chile was on the brink of civil war with the Communist "terrorists." Pinochet is immortalized as a statue on the front steps of the academy, and honored as the only military commander

with his very own plaque both in front of the Academy and on the walls of the main hall.

Memoria como una ruptura is best demonstrated by the accounts of Luis Navarro and Ana Gonzalez, two individuals scarred by the pain and loss they suffered as a result of the dictatorship. Ana Gonzalez, now 80 years old and recently profiled by the New York Times, is one of Chile's most prominent memory advocates. She lost five relatives, including her sons, to Pinochet's regime; all of them "disappeared." She never recovered their bodies or discovered what happened to them. Stern defines "memory as an unresolved rupture," as the memory of those individuals who have failed to come to terms with their experiences. Many lead "double lives:" a superficial life in which they pretend to forget their experiences of torture or persecution under the dictatorship, and a "deep" life in which the pain of their memories still afflicts them.

The third type, "*memoria como persecución*," or memory as persecution and awakening, defines those people who lived in perpetual fear of arrest or victimization and fled the machinations of the regime by living low-profile lives in the country or by remaining silent. They are the silent witnesses to the atrocities of the regime.

The fourth and most potent form of memory is "*el olvido*," or "forgotten memory." Individuals in this memory camp actively choose to forget the past and prefer to leave Chile's dirty past behind. Roberto Soto, my host father in Chile, was unwilling to acknowledge the importance of his

imprisonment and torture under the dictatorship. Although a victim, he preferred to view his experience as one best left forgotten and unspoken. He had never fully described his experience even to his own wife and daughters, believing it to “serve no purpose” for their lives. “Do I want my daughters to know that their father suffered? No, I prefer to turn the page,” Soto said.

The recollections of thousands can be fitted to these four emblematic frameworks, giving them wider meaning and context. The isolation felt by many victims, especially those within the memory as an unresolved rupture framework, took on new meaning when they realized that their memory and experience was shared, and representative of the suffering of thousands. Emblematic memory is “a process of unfolding interaction and counterpoint with the lore of ‘loose memory’; and the idea of ‘memory knots’ that demand attention, calling forth publicity and contentiousness that interrupt the more unthinking flow of habitual, everyday life”²⁶.

Building upon his four memory frameworks, Stern went on to detail Chile’s memory struggles through 2006, in his third volume “Reckoning With Pinochet.” Stern takes the stance that Chileans have overcome the memory impasse and reached a point of framing the dictatorship and human rights violations as a “shared tragedy,” in which all members of society take their share of the blame for the oppression. Mainstream politics and society have run left and the common response from the moderate majority to the question: “What do you think of the dictatorship?” is invariably: “I believe

²⁶ Stern, S.J. *Remembering Pinochet*, 104.

that there was much chaos and confusion at the time and that perhaps the military coup was necessary to restore order, but the human rights violations cannot be justified, no matter how well Pinochet helped the economy recover.” That is the socially acceptable answer; an answer that encompasses both the right and the left into an essentially banal and non-confrontational camp. In a still-divided classist and conservative society, many view human rights as a soft topic.

The president of Amnesty International Chile, Hernán Vergara, was emphatic that mainstream Chile, and Chile’s new president, Sebastián Piñera, shoves human rights to one side as it strives for economic progress and development.

Sebastián Piñera, a member of the political party, Renovación Nacional, is the first president elected from the political right since Pinochet held power, causing worry among human rights groups and renewed conversation about the dictator and his oppressive rule among everyone else. His election signals for others that Chile may indeed be entering a new era of recovery from the dictatorship.

Strong opinions abound among the memory camps, particularly among the older generation who lived through the dictatorship. “Chile’s human rights history is bloody,” he said. “The understanding even today, after a brutal dictatorship, that human rights are a low priority to this government.”

Vergara's specific complaints were the treatment of Chile's indigenous population, the Mapuche, water rights in the North, and gender equality, but he explicitly said that Chile's dedication to human rights stems from Pinochet's legacy and a stigma that human rights advocates are somehow "radicals."

"The tendency of those in power is to stigmatize the human rights theme. A topic that should be part of our very being, for we are human after all, and we all have rights, is instead converted into a taboo, a political issue, and an issue that is only a priority when those in power say it is. We, as Chileans, need to take power into our own hands, and make human rights a part of our daily lives."

"I blame the government," he continued. "I blame the government for not establishing laws and policies that defend the civil and human rights of all Chileans in the past, present and future."

The stigma Vergara points to is a reality that Ana Gonzalez lives.

Gonzalez, a long-time Communist party member and social activist, suffered personally at the hands of the dictatorship.

She and her remaining relatives live in La Legua, Chile's poorest and most dangerous *población*. I traveled to meet with her at her home on a Friday afternoon. La Legua is located on the outskirts of Santiago, where the poor working class was relegated to shantytowns before and during Pinochet's regime. As I traveled further away from the city's center, I noticed more graffiti and makeshift signs pointing down alleyways, naming them as

“Liberty Street,” or “Freedom Avenue.” The graffiti proclaimed in uneven letters, “Salvador Allende, mi presidente para siempre.” The working class in Chile still seems to hold onto the dream that Allende promised them: power for the people, power for them, and they’re still waiting for another Allende to deliver the dead president’s promise. This attitude is the one disdained by Chileans living in the more affluent five boroughs surrounding Santiago’s center. The majority of Chileans living in those five boroughs are middle-class to upper-class and of European descent, and they are the class that avoids conflict at all costs. To them, the lower classes on the outskirts of Santiago are the people still clinging onto a now-defunct dream, and proclaiming themselves victims of a period of turmoil that should have long been forgotten. But they refuse to forget.

Gonzalez was one of the first women to join the Agrupación de Familiares de los Detenidos y Desaparecidos, and her face is familiar to many Chileans in several famous photos taken by human rights photographer, Luis Navarro, while she campaigned with other women against the government who held her sons and relatives hostage during the dictatorship. She never discovered the whereabouts or what happened to her two sons and three relatives that disappeared in 1976. In 2009, the government launched a campaign to link DNA samples from families to the remains of victims presumably “disappeared” during the dictatorship. Although Gonzalez is the face of the search for truth and justice for many, she still feels stigmatized by Chilean society.

Sad and surprisingly sharp-tongued for such a grandmotherly figure, Gonzalez still chain-smokes at 84 years old, and spoke bitterly of a Chile she believes has been corrupted without repair. “Democracy died with my father, *mi presidente*, Salvador Allende,” she rasped softly, her eyes straying to the hundreds of pictures lining her walls, all of her disappeared family and her search to find them.

“They tell us that this society has changed, that Chile is a developed country, however, we think what those in power want us to think. We are responding to their demands that we forgive and forget,” she said.

“But I will never forgive.”

VI. THE OPPOSITION

Ana Gonzalez harbors resentment and seemingly insurmountable obstacles to remembering and moving on. She has yet to resolve her grievances against those who insist that her experience is an exaggeration and a low priority on the national agenda. So, we come to the memory impasse. The “other” Chile, on the opposite side of Guzmán’s fractured soul lives in the innermost reaches of Santiago.

Just as the human rights advocacy groups are ostracized as being too “extreme” in their views and actions, the extreme right is perhaps just as radical, and equally incapable of compromise. Two examples spring to mind when speaking of the extreme right: Victor Farías and Hermogenés Pérez de Arce.

Victor Farias was my first interview during my four-month stint in Santiago. I was warned that he was...prickly, and even paranoid. A professor of history at the University of Freiburg in Santiago, Farias has written seven books lambasting Allende and outlining his belief in the Communist conspiracies that nearly destroyed Chile. His most recent book, published just a week after our interview, is called *The Secrets of Salvador Allende's Hidden Vault*. Farias expounds on the belief that Allende was receiving truckloads of imported weapons in order to wage a civil war to take permanent power, and that he was in fact supplying the radical left with the means to violently overthrow the government. He also maintained that the economic policies of Pinochet exonerated him from any "excesses" his government might have been party to saying, "The economy under Pinochet was a perfect system. The left always wants to be victimized."

Staunch in his belief that Pinochet saved Chile, Farias talked for over an hour about the evils of a liberal government and criticized the democracy that has ruled Chile since 1991. When Roberto Soto, a moderate in every way, heard Farias's views, he exclaimed vehemently that "crazy people" like Farias should not be taken seriously and was part of an aberrant minority with no academic validation for their beliefs. Farias, however, while part of a minority, is representative of a small but strong contingent of believers in Pinochet's heroism.

Hermógenes Pérez de Arce is another such conservative thinker. A well-heeled member of the upper class, Pérez de Arce is a Chilean politician

and journalist most famous, or infamous, for his column published in *El Mercurio*, Chile's leading newspaper, since 1982. A columnist for 25 years, Pérez de Arce wrote editorials for the paper for nearly 46 years. His great-grandfather helped found the newspaper in 1900, and Pérez de Arce's family remained closely tied to the paper through the years. "My father wrote for *El Mercurio*, my uncle did, and then I did also. We were all wrapped up in the newspaper," Pérez de Arce said.

He also served as a member of Congress under General Pinochet for eight years in the late 1970s to early 80s. "Certainly I knew Pinochet personally, he was an astute person, with a good judgment and good sense of the people around him He was not a dictator, there were any more liberties under Pinochet then there were under Allende," he said.

He took, and continues to take, a public stance defending Pinochet, saying, "20th century historians will remember Pinochet as the best statesman Chile has ever seen."

Although Pérez is outspoken, making most of Chile uncomfortable, thousands agree with his sentiment that the right signifies "all that is contrary to disorder, delinquency, and respects the law."²⁷ This very sentiment is what drove Chileans to allow the dictatorship to take hold, allow an impasse to block the search for truth in the 1990s, and continues to be a source of ambivalence today with respect to the memory question. Again,

²⁷ La Nación. "Hermógenes Pérez de Arce: 'Piñera no tiene los atributos para ser Presidente.'" Retrieved from: La Nación: <http://www.lanacion.cl/hermogenes-perez-de-arce-pinera-no-tiene-los-atributos-para-ser-presidente-/noticias/2009-12-05/182013.html>

Pérez reiterated Farias's vehement rhetoric that the Communists were terrorists. "Pinochet's arrest and court judgment was all a lie," he said in an interview with me. "Everything they say is leftist propaganda and it's accepted as the true version of Chilean history today."

While Pérez de Arce is an influential individual in the public eye, he is still an individual, and he admits that he is among a small group of thinkers still living in the country. After interviewing Pérez de Arce and Farias, I began to think that Chile's memory question was, in truth, resolved if only a few extremists still believed in Pinochet and his methods. More disturbing was the day I spent at the Escuela Militar, or Chile's national military academy.

Early in the morning, a smiling, cherubic man greeted me by the gate. With a warm and open manner, General Juan Lucar Figueroa ushered me onto the distinguished campus and into his office for our interview.

Figueroa was a general stationed in Punta Arenas from 1970-1973, the years under Allende, and remembers the three years as "chaos," during which he was unable to secure milk for his newborn child or its mother. He remembers the relief he felt when the military and General Pinochet stepped in to take the government back from "the Communist terrorist groups," as he referred to the leftist coalition of the early '70s. "The Popular Unity government (Allende's political coalition) was an utter disaster," he told me as we sipped hot tea in his office. "The government was modeling itself after

Cuba, in fact Cuba was secretly shipping firearms and weapons to the organized terrorist groups wreaking havoc under Allende.”

(There has never been any historical evidence to suggest that Allende was receiving military arms from Cuba.)

I also spoke with the head of the school’s history department, Ramon Bascur Gaete, a lawyer, academic and former judge on the Supreme Court during the Pinochet years. “The left idolizes Allende even today, a man who managed in three years to destroy the fundamental economic, social and political bases in Chile...the majority of the Chilean people called for the end of his regime,” Baete said. “Furthermore, there was horrible violence, terrorists formed armed groups including the MIR and Frente Patriótico, and during those three years of the Unidad Popular there were civilian deaths as a result of this terrorist activity.”

The rhetoric espoused by Farias, Pérez de Arce and the Escuela Militar is a major stigmatizing factor according to Vergara and Gonzalez, and is repeated by varying degrees by many Chileans. The members of the younger generation, especially, find themselves caught between the loud rhetoric of the two extremes and tend to follow their parents’ examples of feigning deafness. Therefore, ignorance leads to apathy, and young Chileans, particularly those born after the regime fell, find themselves wondering why so many political debates and policy decisions come back to an argument about Pinochet, or Allende, and the ideologies they represent when they have little idea what the two men really represented to Chile at the time.

As one young Chilean ex-cadet of the Escuela Militar said: “Chile is a country of extremes. I guess nobody can be in the middle in the end even though they try to be. Everything comes back to Allende or Pinochet, or whether you are to the left or right, and nobody wants to take the blame.”

VII. MOVING ON: IS IT POSSIBLE?

Stern observed a memory impasse in the mid-to-late-1990s, saw it break open when Pinochet was arrested in London, and documented Chile’s struggle to seek truth and justice through the early 2000s. Today, Chileans have reached another impasse, and an impasse that may have long-term consequences for Chile’s youth as they listen to the debate about issues they feel are “of the older generation,” according to a New York Times article published in 2009. The impasse has evolved and moved from Stern’s generation to mine, and Chile’s youth will be the ones to address and resolve it...if Stern’s generation takes the initiative to transmit memory to the youth through education and acknowledgement of continuing issues that hinder a true solution to the memory struggles still being fought by Chile’s older generations.

VIII. WHEN IS ENOUGH, ENOUGH?

Michelle Bachelet, Chile's president before Piñera, and also a victim of torture under Pinochet's regime, took the initiative to establish a Museum of Memory and Human Rights in an attempt to provide access to Chile's historical memory of the dictatorship and specifically educate the youth. Bachelet, a popular president, was a pioneer in uncovering and attempting to resolve the memory struggle, but when Sebastián Piñera, a member of the rightist coalition, became president in 2009, the government's dedication to human rights and memory issues was again called into question. The transition, however, between from Bachelet's presidency to Piñera's, was remarkably smooth given anxiety from the left that Piñera would reinstate Pinochet-era policies and show a lack of commitment to human rights.

Bachelet represented a Chile characterized by freedom of expression and dedication to resolving the divide in Chile's "fractured soul," but Piñera may be a representation that Chile is indeed bridging that gap between the politico-social right and left. Much of Chile, especially the left, however, remains suspicious that Piñera is only giving lip service to a continued dedication to human rights. He did not outspokenly support Pinochet during his regime and promised during his presidential campaign that he would not instate Pinochet supporters as part of his cabinet or other important government offices. He has, however, caused consternation by considering the passage of the Bicentennial Pardon, which would release hundreds of military officers serving sentences for human-rights violations for crimes

committed during the Pinochet years²⁸. A proposal of the Catholic Church as a humanitarian measure for elderly or ill individuals, the Bicentennial Pardon created waves among human rights group. Piñera, however, eventually rejected the proposal.

In June 2010, I reported on a meeting between the Agrupación and the new president, the first president from the political right to be in power since Pinochet. While not an explosive appointment, Piñera as president caused murmurs of quiet anxiety rippled through the leftist coalitions, especially Chile's human rights groups. The Agrupación, along with Romy Schmidt, the director of the new Museum of Memory and Human Rights, criticized Piñera's perceived lack of commitment to human rights. What especially grieved Schmidt were the budget cuts Piñera made to renovating the Museum after the February 2010 earthquake destroyed much of the newly constructed building. Schmidt had received a promise from Bachelet's government of a further \$522,000 in funds to repair the museum. Piñera had failed to provide the promised funds, and to this day has not provided funding for the Museum. The Agrupación additionally criticized Piñera's reluctance to proactively continue prosecuting human rights violators, and failing to repeal a section of the law preventing retired military and government officials from being brought to trial for human rights violations

²⁸ Mehta, Christine. (2010, June 25). Chile Human Rights Advocates Question President's Commitment to Human Rights. *The Santiago Times*. Retrieved from www.santiagotimes.cl.

by invoking the 1973-1978 Amnesty Law²⁹. However, Piñera and his government expressed surprise, and some annoyance, at the strong statements issued by the human rights sector saying, “I am convinced that a government that believes in democracy and in the state of law should respect, promote and defend human rights in every place and every circumstance.”

Piñera never supported the regime at any point in time, voting “No” during the 1988 plebiscite.

The human rights groups, however, maintained that memory and the search for justice is a “never-ending battle” and said that Piñera’s steps were not enough. “We have heard over the past 20 years about the government’s commitment to human rights, but when one sees that the courts continue setting free those who committed crimes against humanity, and that the cases of the 4,000 people killed or 30,000 tortured are not being investigated, there is a need to take action,” said Lorena Pizarro, the president of the Agrupación.

The heated discussion in June between Piñera and the human rights groups brings to light several important questions: when is the need for human rights and memory advocates over? Is Piñera’s election a sign that Chile is in truth ready to “turn the page” on the memory question? And are

²⁹ Mehta, Christine. (2010, June 25). Chile Human Rights Advocates Question President’s Commitment to Human Rights. *The Santiago Times*. Retrieved from www.santiagotimes.cl.

the advocacy groups fighting for an obsolete cause? Schmidt's arguments and criticism hold more relevance as she attempts to construct the museum commissioned by Bachelet as a memorial and education center, crucial for educating those born after the dictatorship about their country's history, and preserve the photographs and documents that tell the story of that era. The Agrupación, on the other hand, argues the same issues that have been argued since the fall of Pinochet, and as each year passes, their arguments fall on deaf ears. The government believes it is taking the necessary measures to bring justice to those who deserve it, and the Chilean people are behind their government. The impasse has moved from the generation of the families of the disappeared, to the indifferent children who suffer from the ramifications of a closed and ambivalent society. Schmidt's initiative of transforming the Museum of Memory into an educational center is a measure that could help to counteract the distance felt by the younger generation from their volatile past, and help the young voters to become more engaged in their history and politics than in the past decade.

Eastern Europe, although struggling to retain memory after 60 years, rather than 20 as in Chile's case, is facing the same challenge in engaging its youth. The Polish are actively addressing the issue by insisting that Auschwitz needs to be updated to engage the changing generations, according to a New York Times article published in February 2011³⁰. At the

³⁰ Kimmelman, Michael. (2011, February 18). Auschwitz shifts from memorializing to teaching. *New York Times*. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, the barracks and blocks will in the future include explanations and interactive features to walk the visitor through the concentration camp experience step-by-step, without marring the authenticity of the place.

Mark Zajec, a 31 year-old magazine editor and secretary for the international Auschwitz Council said, “When I am at Auschwitz I start looking at the world and at my own life. I remind myself of what’s important, which is so easy to forget. In the kingdom of death you can find the meaning of life. At the biggest cemetery in the world I know what I live for”³¹.

Turning what used to “memory sites” into education centers could serve a more useful purpose for promoting understanding in a generation that is removed from the actual event. For young Polish children, and in Chile, Chilean children, memorials represent history, and not a history they are taught in the high school classroom. My Chilean host sister, Nacha Soto Bobenreith, confided to me during a control group discussion organized for my final project in Spring 2009, that her high school lacked a comprehensive section on the years between 1970 and 1991. “We just didn’t learn about it,” she said.

A boy named Daniel Pérez Arriagada further corroborated her statement, although he believed he was stating the opposite. A military school dropout, Pérez had been a cadet at the Escuela Militar for two years, when he was 18 and 19 years old, before leaving to pursue a university

³¹ Kimmelman, 2010, February 18.

education. Despite his decision to pursue a civilian career, he remains filled with national and militaristic pride. His views are that Pinochet was not a criminal and the coup was a necessary military measure, however he did not condone the military abuses that occurred during the regime. At the Escuela Militar, he said he learned from the best history department in the country. When I visited the Escuela Militar and asked to see a copy of the humanities curriculum, I noted that the history department taught using texts written by very conservative historians, including Gonzalo Vial. The head of the history department also lost no time in assuring me that the Communists were terrorist groups in the late 1960s and 1970s (although recent historical accounts maintain that the MIR and Frente Patriótico³² remained non-violent until the 1980s). In my opinion, based upon perusing the academy's curriculum and interviews with Figueroa, Baete and the Escuela Militar director, Pérez's education was biased and incomplete, failing to promote openness or debate about the true version of historical facts. Pérez, 22, is also an example of a passionate, ideological Chilean youth, eternally faithful to his flag and national pride, but utterly disenchanted with politics. He is not registered to vote. "I do not care to vote," he said.

Albeit, the memory of the Holocaust is a different case from Latin American dictatorships, and from that of Chile, but Chile can learn from

³² The Frente Patriotico was a militant group that arose in the 1980s in rebellion of Pinochet's government. The group was responsible for the assassination attempt on Pinochet in 1986.

Eastern Europe's move toward adaptation with the changing times, and overcoming societal disengagement with history and memory.

If one looks to Hannah Arendt's philosophy, memory is always relevant, but how that memory is expressed is crucial in allowing that memory to effectively preventing extremes of political violence from ever arising again. In Chile, as in Poland, memorials need to become education centers, and unfiltered versions of history need to be included in high school curricula, not just the university classroom, to break through the atmosphere of indifference and disdain for politics that permeates through young Chilean society.

"I believe that the Museum serves an enormously important function in ensuring that human rights violations never happen again in this country," said Romy Schmidt to me in July 2010. "It is the bridge between the past, present and future of Chile's historical memory."

IX. MEMORY MATTERS

The complexity of Chile's memory struggles and still existent "impasse" is not unique to Chile. Naturally, all countries that have experienced dictatorship or totalitarian movements have struggled with some semblance of the memory question after the regime has fallen: Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russia, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and now even countries in the Middle East, such as Egypt, as it emerges from 30 years of authoritarian rule and begins to murmur about human rights violations that occurred

under Mubarak's rule. "A history of memory struggles is a quest, always exploratory and unfinished, to understand the subjectivity of a society over time," said Stern in his first book³³.

Like Chile, other Latin American countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, Peru and Mexico have struggled to overcome the influence of their past dictatorships in accepting a unified version of national "truth" when defining their countries' historical memory. Argentina and Peru in particular are seen by academics as much further along in acceptance and recuperation than Chile for several reasons. Mexico, on the other hand, lags far behind.

The short but brutal Argentine dictatorship (1976-1983) is often compared to Chile's. The two dictatorships appeared to borrow methods of oppression from one another and learn from each other's perceived mistakes. Unlike Pinochet's regime, the Argentine state cracked down more harshly on "subversives," or the opposition, during the junta's seven-year rule. Instead of killing about 3,000 people and torturing upwards of 30,000, the Argentine military reversed those numbers, preferring to kill outright then intimidate through torture, threats and exile. Their bloody approach was their undoing in the end. Rocked by internal lack of stability, the country's economic deterioration, and a disastrous defeat at Malvinas by the British, the military lost credibility with the people of Argentina, along with its political power.

³³ Stern, S.J. *Remembering Pinochet's Chile*, xxxi.

Argentina's transition to democracy was a headlong rush into truth-seeking and legal prosecution of human rights violators. Although the invasiveness of the truth commissions into the military caused a rebellion in the late 1980s, the Argentine truth commission remains one of the most thorough and timely in Latin America. Lack of fear of the military and an overwhelming conviction by the majority that the military junta was criminal at worst, incompetent at best, helped to spur an exploration of collective memory that brought truth and reconciliation to the top of Argentina's recovery agenda³⁴.

Pinochet and his military, in contrast to Argentina's military, left the presidential office still holding positions of power. Pinochet remained the commander of the armed forces until 1998, when he was arrested in London, and was nearly instated as Senator-for-Life, Chile's highest political honor. Given that Pinochet and his influence still hovered over the truth seeking process, it is unsurprising that Chile's democratic transition was muted.

X. CONCLUSION

In the 20th century, we can see a pattern of repression taking hold, a vicious cycle of totalitarian regimes and dictatorship born out of ideological radicalism. Memory is not the answer to avoiding the pattern but

³⁴ Feitlowitz, M. (1998). *A Lexicon of Terror*. New York: Oxford University Press.

educational centers, memory, and cultural openness about memory can prevent the repetition of past atrocities.

In Chile, the key to confronting the reasons behind lack of political participation and recurring social confrontation between the left and right will lie in addressing the country's fractured collective memory of the past. Chile may never heal its fractured soul and return to what Stern refers to as the "cultural fiction once popular in mid-century: the idea of a united national soul or people."³⁵

Chile as a united nation began to fray in the 1960s, broke in 1973, and festered during the democratic transition in the early 1990s. Although it no longer bleeds, the scarring has remained, inhibiting the two separate parts of Chile's fractured soul to fully heal. The wound may never fully heal until the last remaining members of the generation that lived through the dictatorship are gone, and those born after the dictatorship (after 1990) become the influential population in Chile's society.

Then, the scars may be forgotten. However, if the current generation fails to educate the younger about Pinochet's legacy, and confront and acknowledge the court cases still being brought against human rights violators, the still-influential classism propagated by Pinochet, and his policies that remain in place, the future generation will only encounter a new set of problems that may not directly link to the dictator, but will be byproducts of a changed and fractured nation.

³⁵ Stern, S. J. (2010, March). Filming the Fractured Soul of Chile: Guzmán's Epic and Elegy of Revolution. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 43(2), 40-45.

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THE VOICES OF TRUTH:

Memory as an “open wound,” and memory as “salvation”

Steve Stern, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, divided Chile's historical memory into four camps: salvation, persecution, the open wound, and the closed box. Although all four exist in Chilean society today, the two most evocative are memory as an open wound, and memory as salvation. Members of these two camps live on the fringes of Chilean politics and society. They mingle among the mainstream Chileans who prefer to forget, or place their memories in a “closed box,” as Stern would say. Modern-day Chileans that belong to the open wound or salvation camps, however, cannot forget.

Memory as an Open Wound

“The Photographer of the Dead”



There are some individuals who never escape the painful memories that haunt them, memories of torture, death and disillusionment. They lead “double lives.” One “surface life” where they go on from day to day as a normal person and underneath they lead a “secret life” hidden from the rest of us. Their secret life is full of unresolved pain, bitterness and anger.

The Wounded Man

Lined eyes gaze dully through the haze of cigarette smoke. He takes another contemplative drag, glancing over at me before proffering his packet of Marlboro Reds: “*Fumas?*” he says, “You smoke?”

Well, not usually, but Luis Navarro is looking for a companionable cigarette and a cup of coffee while he conjures up scenes from his past-images he’d rather forget but are still vividly clear in his mind’s eye, even after 30 years. I take a cigarette, light it, and wait.

He sits back in his chair, surrounded by his photography in his tiny, cold apartment. "I don't like to talk about my life," he says. "I only ever wanted to make beauty, but I ended up documenting death."

At 72 years old, Luis Navarro is one of the most famous human rights photographers of the Chilean dictatorship. Known as the "Photographer of the Dead," Navarro lives alone, tortured by the memory of dead bodies, vacant unseeing eyes, and the cries of families who finally found their disappeared loved ones...crammed into a large clay oven in Lonquén, Chile.

Besides documenting the discovery of the bodies at Lonquén, Navarro was imprisoned by General Augusto Pinochet's secret police on March 11, 1981, and brutally tortured for five days before he was released. Navarro's arrest motivated 29 human rights photographers to form the *Asociación de los Fotógrafos Independientes* (AFI), as a measure to protect each other from being government targets.

"I am proud to say that I was the only one (photographer) captured," Navarro said.

"I knew that I would be detained some day. It was inevitable. Obviously I was afraid, but I endured the ordeal with conviction and with rage...it was five days of drugs. They hit me and burned me with cigarettes. They hit me so much after they realized that it was not easy to kill me. After I was released, I spent two or three months looking at almost nothing with out

⁻ Part of www.christinemehta.com

the help of drugs. They will not kill you, but subject you with everything else.”⁻

The Rise of Human Rights Photography in Chile

A boy from northern Chile, Navarro was caught in the rising tide of opposition to the dictatorship during the 70s and 80s. He says he rejects politics but was appalled by the fall of democracy. Navarro joined the Communist Party in 1973 out of what he called his “sense of justice.” Although not a fervent Communist, he was wholly opposed to the dictatorship. He began venturing out into Santiago’s streets every day to photograph the atrocities he saw the police and military commit under the new regime.

“I was the first photographer taking photos in the streets that were depicting the dictatorship in an unfavorable light. I won awards, I made myself an internationally known photographer,” Navarro said.

In addition to co-founding the AFI, Navarro worked with human rights organizations including the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, one of the most prominent victims’ support organizations of the era, to find the missing and raise awareness that Pinochet’s government was torturing and murdering its people.

Navarro and the AFI were important voices that documented the human rights violations through art, cinematography and photography. The group grew to nearly 300 members by 1990, but dissolved when democracy

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returned to Chile under the political party Concertación president, Patricio Aylwin. Navarro was the last president of the AFI before it disbanded.

Navarro's and the AFI's work has been collected and distributed by museums, archives, and universities, and studied for its aesthetic quality as well as the significance of the events the photographers documented.

Gonzalo Leiva, 44, a history professor at la Universidad Católica de Chile, has studied the history of photography in Chile. He has also published and co-authored several books on the AFI and their work including "Multitudes de Sombra," and Navarro's collection of work, "La Potencia de la Memoria." ⁻

The dictatorship, he explained, sought to cultivate a certain image domestically and internationally, but the methods that the AFI took to challenge the official rhetoric not only succeeded, but also broke open the field of photography to a wider audience as an aesthetic and a means of retelling history.

"The dictatorship was a very important period for photography. Before the dictatorship, there really were no Chilean photographers, but the dictatorship and the drive to document what was happening caused many artists to turn to photography instead," Leiva said.

Sebastian Moreno, a Chilean filmmaker who made the documentary "City of the Photographers," also worked with Navarro and other AFI

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photographers. His documentary captures the excitement and danger facing the human rights photographers of the Pinochet era.

“For photographers, the most exciting time, the most beautiful time was in fact the dictatorship. They lived each day so intensely, doing what they were called to do,” Moreno said.

Moreno’s father was closely associated with photographers working during the dictatorship. He even had a darkroom set up in his basement so the photographers could discreetly develop their film.

“I was just a child, and my father didn’t tell me anything. It was too dangerous for me to know, but I grew up surrounded by photographers,” Moreno said.

A New Generation

Moreno grew up under the dictatorship, but was only aware of it with a child’s consciousness. Just 18 years old when Pinochet stepped down, Moreno does not identify himself as a “victim of the dictatorship,” but regardless feels “promised to his country’s history.”

“I am not a victim of the dictatorship, but there still remains the obligation to know what happened...Never in Chile was a true version of history established that said what the dictatorship did was wrong. It’s not taught in schools, quite the opposite, there are many people who defend the dictatorship because of the economic good it brought to Chile.”

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He said he is the new generation of filmmakers and photographer that is trying to continue the work started by the AFI, and specifically, Navarro.

“I think Luis is a wonderful photographer, but I think he is a person that still harbors pain within. I think he represents the extent of the harm the dictatorship wrought. Luis is very angry with a lot of people still, and I don’t know why,” Moreno said.

Leiva is also a personal friend of Navarro after meeting him in Paris more than a decade ago. ⁷

“As a person and an artist, Luis is a person that has overcome horrific trauma in his life. I love him very much but he is a complex person, very demanding, critical and possessive,” Leiva said.

Moreno said it is time for the younger generation to take the lead in remembering Chile’s past, and reconciling with it once and for all.

Reconciliation, he said, is key to ending the struggle between those who remember the dictatorship as an atrocity, and those who remember it as the salvation of the country from President Salvador Allende’s socialism. Human rights advocates, he said, are stigmatized for continuing to remember the violations wrought by Pinochet’s dictatorship. For a country that would rather see 17 years of its history swept under the rug, human rights advocates are sometimes unwelcome voices.

“This is a country where maybe tomorrow, you could be accused of being a radical for defending water rights in the north,” he said.

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Moreno's life goal is to pass along the memory of what happened to Chile because it ignored human rights under Pinochet.

"Although our schools are not teaching the kids the history of the dictatorship, there are many ways to pass along memory: conversations, music...and movies. Each of us can do something in our own way," he said.

-

The Bitter End

Luis exhaled slowly, closing his eyes. For him, there is little hope that Chile will ever change. He believes that Chile, especially the younger generation, will only focus on moving forward as a Latin American economic powerhouse. As much as society's indifference angers him, he says his role in the human rights struggle is over. He wants to create art and beauty, not document violence.

"I have many photos of violence," he said, his mouth twisting. "The violence presented through the eyes of the photo, that was my work."

"The only thing I had driving me was my sense of justice. I'm not going to deny it. But for what? Chile has no justice, it is not a democracy."

"I am finished with this fight. I can't do anymore."

Ash fell to the floor from his cigarette stub.

His photographs on the wall, I noticed, were faded.

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Memory As Salvation

Hermógenes Pérez del Arce and Chile's Military Academy

Memory as "salvation" defines those Chileans that saw Pinochet as Chile's savior from the chaos of Communism, and support him and his policies even today. As surprising as it may seem, they dwell in unexpectedly prominent echelons of Chilean society.

The Controversial Columnist



Hermógenes Pérez de Arce sat in his comfortable office, furnished with elegant chairs and heavy wooden furniture. The walls were adorned with floor-to-ceiling portraits of his grandfather and great-grandfather. Dressed in a dark suit, the journalist, former politician, and outspoken Pinochet supporter emanated a casual air of old-fashioned British refinement.

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Peréz de Arce represents a small but powerful minority that remembers General Pinochet as Chile's savior from Socialist president, Salvador Allende's liberal policies. Chile has, for the most part, accepted that Pinochet employed torture and terror to gain and retain power, but Peréz de Arce still thinks differently.⁷

"Pinochet's arrest and court judgment was all a lie...Everything they say is leftist propaganda and it's accepted as the true version of Chilean history today," he said.

Peréz de Arce was a well-known *El Mercurio* columnist for 25 years, and wrote editorials for the paper for nearly 46 years. In fact, his great-grandfather helped found Chile's leading newspaper in 1900, and Peréz de Arce's family remained closely tied to the paper. "My father wrote for *El Mercurio*, my uncle did, and then I did also. We were all wrapped up in the newspaper," Peréz de Arce said.

He also served as a member of Congress under General Pinochet for eight years in the late 1970s to early 80s. "Certainly I knew Pinochet personally. He was an astute person, with a good judgment, and good sense of the people around him. He was not a dictator. There were many more liberties under Pinochet than there were under Allende," he said.

Peréz de Arce is notorious in Chile for his political opinions and support of Pinochet. Beneath his distinguished façade is a rabidly right-wing capitalist and anti-Communist.

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Peréz de Arce discarded the records of those kidnapped, killed, and tortured during the Pinochet years as "leftist propaganda," and said those people were "victims of the radical Communist groups themselves." Peréz de Arce said that Allende supporters such as the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) and Frente Patriótico were solely responsible for the violence during Pinochet's regime, not the government.

According to Peréz de Arce, the MIR and other opposition groups were responsible for the majority of Chilean deaths and disappearances. "Besides, very few people were killed that first year after Pinochet came to power, and after 1973 only 1,300 more. An insignificant number," he commented dismissively. ⁻

Then, he pulled a list of numbers from his pocket that he carries with him at all times. The numbers were the number of killed, disappeared, and tortured people from 1973-1990, according to a Chilean government-commissioned report (Commission for National Recovery and Reconstruction) that detailed numbers of human rights violations far lower than the officially accepted numbers issued in the Rettig Report. The Rettig Report lists the total number of human rights violation at 3,917 people. The government's commission: 1,907.

"You see? The left is trying to be the victim and inflate the numbers," he said. "Everybody knew that the Unidad Popular [the Communist left] had

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huge stores of weapons and were planning a civil war. There was a need to destroy the extremist threat."

"All of the horrors, all the torture in places like Villa Grimaldi and the National Stadium are false, invented. There was a convent of nuns living in front of the Villa Grimaldi who carried milk to the Villa Grimaldi every day. They would have heard screaming if there was any. It's impossible that they tortured the prisoners there," he continued.

Today in Chile, Pérez de Arce is one of a very small group of thinkers, but his words carry weight, especially as he is a public figure and respected columnist. *El Mercurio* never asked him to step down, and the paper always treated him with deference, but he resigned a few years ago saying "I got bored because the environment that has developed in this country doesn't agree with me. There was a change in public opinion that left me isolated. I decided to give up writing as a columnist and now have my blog where I write what I want. Feedback doesn't matter to me. Sometimes people comment, and not always good things, but I don't care."

Besides running his personal blog, Pérez de Arce has also published a collection of his *El Mercurio* articles called "Against the Current," and books explaining his version of Chilean historical events and Pinochet's arrest in London. The books are called "Europe Vs. Pinochet," and "The Truth About Pinochet's Trial."

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The Military Academy

Although Pérez de Arce's opinions are strong, he is still just one man. Pérez de Arce is an influential figure but those that disagree with him easily dismiss his views. An institution that espouses his views is more difficult to disregard, especially when that institution is the respected National Military Academy in Santiago, Chile.

On the outskirts of Santiago, the imposing Escuela Militar, Chile's national military academy, houses 1,600 cadets, all aspiring to be part of the "proud tradition" of Chile's *ejercito*, or army.

On an early Monday morning in August 2010, the cadets were out practicing their weekly drills to the beating of drums on the field. The military world is a rigid one, full of rules, order, and a sense of strict hierarchy. The precision and discipline of the drilling cadets was a sharp contrast to the traffic exhaust and pedestrian bustle lying just outside the Academy's gates.

General Juan Lucar Figueroa, a smiling, cherubic man with a breezy, open manner, surveyed the cadets before beaming: "These cadets receive some of the most disciplined training in the world."

Leading me onto the front patio of the main building, Figueroa showed me the statue of Pinochet and plaque dedicated to his memory sitting on the top step. "He is the only commander of the army to have his own plaque and statue on school grounds," Figueroa said.

⁻ Part of www.christinemehta.com

With pride in his voice, Figueroa said that General Augusto Pinochet was one of only two military commanders to ever serve as president of the Republic, and he was “certainly the most successful.”

Figueroa is the director of the Department of Law and Social Sciences and a graduate of the fabled Escuela Militar. The general was stationed in Punta Arenas from 1970-1973, the years under Allende, and remembers that time as "chaos." He remembers the relief he felt when the military and General Pinochet stepped in to take the government back from "the Communist terrorist groups," as he referred to the leftist coalition of the early 70s. "The Popular Unity government (Allende's political coalition, he belonged to the Socialist Party), was an utter disaster," he said, sipping on a cup of hot tea in his office.

"The government was modeling itself after Cuba. In fact Cuba was secretly shipping firearms and weapons to the organized terrorist groups wreaking havoc under Allende."

"Terrorist groups" was a new phrase for me.

Figueroa was referring to the leftist social organizations including the most well-known supporters of Allende, MIR, which worked to bring down the Pinochet government in the 1980s, but in the early '70s was not yet a "militant," or armed, group.

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Growing somber, Figueroa recalled the food shortages and rampant inflation under Allende's rule. "I couldn't even get milk for my baby," he said. "I was afraid she would die at times."

When the military took power in 1973, Figueroa was still in Punto Arenas. He says he felt nothing but relief to hear that Allende was no longer the president, and that Chile would turn from the socialist policies he had tried to implement. Shortly after Pinochet came to power, Figueroa returned to Santiago to take a position at the Escuela Militar.

Figueroa's colleague, the head of the military school's history department, Ramón Bascur Gaete, was a lawyer, academic and judge on the Supreme Court during the Pinochet years. Gaete discussed the history curriculum taught to the military cadets and his experience of the transition from Allende's government to Pinochet's regime.

"The left idolizes Allende even to this day, a man who managed in three years to destroy the fundamental economic, social and political bases in Chile...the majority of the Chilean people called for the end of his regime," said Gaete.

"Furthermore, there was horrible violence. Terrorists formed armed groups including the MIR, VOP and Frente Patriótico, and during those three years of the Unidad Popular there were civilian deaths as a result of this terrorist activity."

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Immediately following my interviews at the Escuela Militar I spoke again with a Chilean author, Mónica Echeverría, who has written extensively about the dictatorship and its key players. At the time, she did not participate actively in any political party, but her daughter Carmen Castillo, was married to Miguel Enríquez, the leader of the MIR from 1967-1974. A high-ranking official of Pinochet's secret police, Miguel Krassnoff, killed him in 1974.

"I can tell you that at that time, before the military coup occurred, there was never one single death or act of violence," said Señora Echeverría. "They prepared for a war in case there was a need for one, but in the end, they were definitely not prepared for a Civil War. Especially not in comparison to the Chilean military, they just didn't have the resources," she said.

"Any acts of violence came after the military coup, after Pinochet came to power."

Who to believe? Both sides, even today, believe their own versions of history.

According to the Rettig Report, a comprehensive report compiled by the truth commission in 1991, the MIR was a revolutionary group founded in 1965, based on the ideology of Che Guevara and his "armed way," to liberate the people and bring about equality in Cuba. In 1968, the group went underground and began to "practice armed actions in preparation for insurrectional taking of power."

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Although the MIR supported Allende's government, the Unidad Popular never associated itself with the MIR and its tactics. Allende was known for his "passive way," a rare concept in a Cold War, communism vs. capitalism era.

In fact, said Señora Echeverría, "Allende wanted to die for his cause. He wanted to be a martyr. When the Chilean military advanced on La Moneda, the MIR called him and said they would defend him, but he told them no, to stay where they were, that this was not their fight," she said. "It was not suicide, it was a sacrifice."

Echeverria's and the military school's contradictory views are so fraught with debate and doubt that even the Rettig Report team states: "The Commission understands that all of these points we have presented are susceptible to diverse and contradictory versions and interpretations. It understands also, that the violence was not exclusively on the part of one particular group, and was fueled by the cause and effect of the acute political polarization, each side acting as if in self-defense."

As one young Chilean ex-cadet of the Escuela Militar said: "Chile is a country of extremes. I guess nobody can be in the middle in the end even though they try to be. Everything comes back to Allende or Pinochet, or whether you are to the left or right, and nobody wants to take the blame."

⁻ Part of www.christinemehta.com

The Key Players:

Steve Stern: A history professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Stern specializes in historical memory and political violence in Latin America. I was first introduced to his work in Chile when I read an excerpt from “Remembering Pinochet’s Chile,” his first of three volumes in his extensive Memory Box Trilogy examining memory struggles in Chile before, during and after the dictatorship. The next two books in the trilogy are called, “Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet’s Chile,” and “Reckoning with Pinochet.”

Marcia Scantlebury: An ex-member of the Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria, Scantlebury is now the director of Chile’s national television networks. In 1975, she was arrested and tortured by the regime and then exiled to Colombia until 1987. She was a key player in bringing about democratic transition and worked as Press Chief in 1994. Scantlebury also directed Bachelet’s initiative to construct a museum dedicated to memory and human rights. Despite human rights activism and opposition to Pinochet, Scantlebury grew up “cuica” or part of a wealthy and privileged Santiago family. Her views differ from those of her parents, who feared Communism, however, Scantlebury takes a surprisingly moderate tone with regard to the dictatorship despite what she suffered at the hands of Pinochet’s secret police.

Romy Schmidt: Like Scantlebury, Schmidt was raised in a privileged household and was just a child during the dictatorship. Now the director of the new Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Schmidt has dedicated her life to educating Chileans about their collective historical memory.

Ramón Bascur Gaete: Señor Gaete is the head of the history department at the Escuela Militar, Chile’s national military academy. He staunchly defends Pinochet as “the saviour of the country,” and denounces Allende supporters as “terrorists.” The military cadets at the Escuela Militar are required to take human rights courses but well-known conservative authors dominate the history curriculum.

Juan Lucar Figueroa: General Figueroa is the director of the Department of Law and Social Sciences at the Escuela Militar. Subtler about expressing his opinions, Figueroa nonetheless referred to Communists as “terrorists” and showed obvious pride in “General Pinochet, commander of the armed forces and president of the Republic.”

Hermógenes Pérez de Arce: A prominent journalist and politician for nearly 50 years, Pérez de Arce lives comfortably in a well-to-do

neighborhood in Santiago. He talked freely about his conviction that Allende was a Communist, his conspiracy theories that all the deaths attributed to Pinochet's regime were in fact a result of in-fighting between terrorist groups, and his disdain for the human rights activists.

Monica Echeverria: Señora Echeverria is a Chilean author who has written several biographies about prominent Chilean figures including her son-in-law's murderer, Miguel Krassnoff. Echeverria recounted the horror of the dictatorship and the havoc it wreaked upon her and her family.

Hernán Vergara: Señor Vergara is the President of Amnesty International-Chile. Vergara believes that Chileans' apparent lack of dedication to human rights stems from the dictatorship and a still-divided society that stigmatizes human rights activism.

Ana Gonzalez: A human rights activist and co-founder of La Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos. Gonzalez has campaigned for justice all over the world after she lost five family members to the regime. Her face is well-known on human rights advocacy posters in Chile, and she has been featured in some of the most famous photographs from the era.

Luis Navarro: Navarro is a Chilean photographer known as the "Photographer of the Dead." He most clearly represented Stern's construct of "memory as an unresolved rupture." He was active in the opposition movement against Pinochet but since being imprisoned and tortured in 1981, Navarro has visibly struggled with the pain he internalized while working as a human rights photographer.

Historical and Political Figures:

The two most important figures weaving in and out of my narratives are General Augusto Pinochet and President Salvador Allende. Both the men, and the ideals they represent, were the basis for the ideological struggle that tore Chile apart in the 1970s.

General Augusto Pinochet: Chile's most infamous president, Pinochet reigned for 17 years, leaving a trail of violence, distrust, and oppression behind him. Pinochet is a byword for violence, human rights violations, corruption, but also good economic policy. Even today, a Chilean who identifies as right leaning on the political spectrum is assumed to be a Pinochet sympathizer.

President Salvador Allende: Allende is one of Chile's most controversial figures. President for just three years before Pinochet's military took the

presidential palace by force on September 11, 1973, Allende inspired social reformation and implemented chaos. Allende remains one of the most inspirational figures for many Chileans despite his policy failures. He was killed (or committed suicide) on the day of the military coup.

President Michelle Bachelet: Currently the head of UN Women, the former Chilean president was a breakthrough figure for Chile in its journey to cope with the memory of the dictatorship. Bachelet was imprisoned and tortured under the regime and was dedicated much of her presidency to bringing the memory question to resolution, including the construction of the Memory Museum, among other notable achievements.

President Sebastian Piñera: President Piñera is the current president of Chile and the first president from the political right to be elected since Pinochet was in power. His appointment caused anxiety and discussion among human rights advocates and the left-leaning sectors of society, but his smooth transition to the presidency also indicated a new chapter in Chile's recovery process. Voting participation, however, in Piñera's election was at an all-time low for Chilean youth.

To see more, please visit www.christinemehta.com.

The Capstone Summary

The Pinochet Project is a journalist's take on an academically complex topic. I based my research on Steve Stern's work *The Memory Box Trilogy: The Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile*. Stern studies the Chilean struggle to define "collective trauma," when the Chilean military instigated a coup on September 11, 1973 and the next 17 years of dictatorship under General Augusto Pinochet.

Stern, a history professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, breaks down the Chilean people's memory of the dictatorship into four categories: memory as salvation, memory as an open wound, memory as persecution, and *olvido*, or memory as a closed box. Each one of these "memory camps" has struggled against one another in a nation's collective search for truth, and Chile remains divided among the four types of memory today.

The division, I observed, has brought Chile to an "impasse," or insurmountable wall in accepting one version of truth in its historical memory when discussing the dictatorship. The failure to define the trauma wrought by the dictatorship has induced a reluctance to confront the past, muted political discussion, and withdrawal by Chile's youth from political participation and discussion. While Chile would prefer to "close the book" on the Pinochet regime, ignoring the topic and failing to educate the younger generation about the events and consequences of the dictatorship may have

indirect consequences for the future. Despite Chile's best efforts to avoid the Pinochet topic, it continues to take precedence in unexpected ways in everyday life.

Pinochet's lingering policies cause division and tension in Chilean society, antagonizing the older generation and ostracizing the younger generation, who have little to no recollection of the regime, from the political sphere. The youth disenchantment with the topic is particularly significant. They feel that their elders struggle with issues that hold no relevance to youth, but continue to affect their lives regardless. For example, Chileans are eligible for voter registration when they turn 18 years old, the same as in the United States, but when they register, they are obligated to vote at every election, every year, for the rest of their lives, a law put into place by Pinochet's regime. These policies are the lingering legacy of Pinochet, and they are succeeding in driving apathy and disillusionment among the younger generation.

The essential struggle today boils down to the struggle between one group's desire to remember and bring the memory of human rights violation victims to the fore of society, a second's desire to discredit the human rights and memory advocates, and a third's wish to ignore the struggle altogether. The third group is predominant, but only provides a thin veil over the continued friction between the right and the left, and the conservative groups and the human rights advocates. We can identify the two groups with Stern's *memory as salvation* and *memory as an open wound* memory camps. The

struggle between the two memory camps quickly becomes visible after spending only a little time in Santiago.

The “unresolved rupture” in Chilean society, besides having implications for Chile’s future, has even larger international implications. Most Latin American countries have experienced authoritarianism or dictatorship at one time, and are, for the most part, on the road to recovery. The Middle East is now experiencing the same transition to democracy from authoritarianism (albeit under unique circumstances and in a different context than the Latin American countries) that Latin America underwent in the latter half of the 20th century. The ways in which Latin American countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and of course Chile have dealt with their collective traumas, and how they continue to define their nations’ collective memory, could be significant for Middle Eastern countries recovering from authoritarianism over the next half-century.

When I first envisioned *The Pinochet Project*, I struggled with a way to bring life to a potentially abstract and complex topic: the memory of a nation. Memory is not objective or concrete. I knew I would not be dealing with facts, but rather recollections, emotions and tattered shreds of “facts” walking a fine line between fact and fiction. The title--*The Pinochet Project: A Nation’s Search for Truth*—is a testament to the ongoing quest to define a collective truth in a divided nation.

I felt that the only way I could effectively tell the Chilean people’s story about their experience of the dictatorship and their journey to

recovery, was by giving a voice to the individual. Academic analysis alone would exclude the rich, first person narratives I encountered in my own journey to understand how Chilean opinion of General Pinochet, his government, and how the lingering effects of his regime continues to appear in Chilean politics and society today. I have dubbed my approach “narrative academia,” or if you prefer, “academic journalism.” I have combined journalistic methods with academic ones to give life and breath to my work, and a human face to an abstract issue.

Part One is an analysis based on the work done by Steve Stern in the early to mid-1990s about historical memory in Chile. Part Two is a series of articles that feature the most intriguing characters I met and interviewed in Chile. My work, unlike Stern’s, is based solely on interviews I conducted in Santiago, therefore the impressions and conclusions I drew are based exclusively on the information I gathered from the urban population. Stern traveled through Chile to gain other perspectives. I sought, however, to provide a fair and accurate description of the experience of Santiago residents during and after the dictatorship. The Santiago metropolitan region is home to more than half of Chile’s total population and most political and economic power is concentrated in the capital.

I looked for unique angles in my interviews with subjects and attempted to compile stories that shed a different perspective on the state of post-dictatorship, democratic Chile, a country that has, in every appearance, healed but remains plagued by Pinochet’s memory in unexpected ways.

I view academia as the pursuit of knowledge and journalism as the means to distribute that knowledge. With my work, I hoped to go further than analyzing Chile's collective memory, and put the country's experience into a context that is accessible and compelling to everyone.