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Miriam Cook
mcook@pugetsound.edu

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Forty Years Later: Remembering the Pinochet Years in 2013

Why is this year different from all other years?

Miriam Cook

Last week on September 14, 2013, the editor of Chile's largest and most prominent daily newspaper, *El Mercurio*, received a letter from a man named Rodrigo Didier Legarreta asking "Sir, how would we explain to a foreigner that every September 11th, half of the country hates the other, and just one week later everyone is hugging and celebrating together?"¹ Legarreta was seeking an explanation for the dramatic differences in how the country remembers two very historically charged September dates, the 11th and the 18th. September 18th is Independence Day which is, with no exceptions, a national celebration. However, the memory of September 11th divides Chilean society as dramatically as the Andes Mountains divide the South American continent.

September 11 was the day of the 1973 military coup that toppled the democratically elected socialist President Salvador Allende and put into place 17 years of dictatorship under the rule of General Pinochet. Each year on September 11, Chileans remember the coup and the sense of intense fear or great relief it produced. Chilean society has been marked by deep socioeconomic divisions since the colonial era, however the coup magnified these divisions by supporting and advocating for the elite and terrifying and making life increasingly difficult for the impoverished masses. The coup dug a chasm within Chilean society, the divide that shapes the two black and white discourses surrounding September 11th.

¹ Rodrigo Didier Legarreta, "Septiembre en Chile," *El Mercurio*, 9/14/13.

September 2013 marks the coup's 40th anniversary and represents an invitation to uncover historical debates and to bring out what historian Steve Stern infamously calls "the memory box of Pinochet's Chile."² Like every September, this year Chileans pulled this dusty box of memory out of the attic to learn about and remember the past and to look at the past's legacy within the present moment with a magnifying glass. However, this year in particular, a flood of commemorative material emerged from underneath the tangled spider webs of disagreement and sadness surprising Chileans and circling the entire world.

This essay seeks to examine the unique nature of this September's anniversary discourse through looking at the various realities of 2013 and the ways in which the divisive past manifests itself and is talked about. Forty years later, the black and white view of the military coup is present just as strongly as in 1973.³ This division is evident through terminology, socioeconomic status, and urban geographical contrasts within the capital city of Santiago. However, despite this stark continuity, forty years later there are signs of change.

Forty years later, the powerful generation born in democracy is on the streets calling attention to holes and flaws within the system established by dictatorship. Forty years later, the most conservative government since the fall of dictatorship holds power as the country draws closer to November 2013's presidential elections. Forty years later, after the death of the dictator, the memory of military rule and their bloody assumption of power is remembered with increasing bitterness. The 2013 "September memory season"⁴

² Steve Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) 1.

³ Sergio, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, 7-17-13.

⁴ Steve Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet*, 283.

has been a cyclone of official apologies, marches, vigils, and moments of silence to the disappeared. This particular anniversary has been characterized by a new surge of energy to investigate into the past and has had a noticeable impact on increasing Chileans' consciousness of the role the past plays in the present.

The era in question for each "September memory season"⁵ begins in the year 1970 when the socialist candidate Salvador Allende was elected to the presidency. Allende rode into office on the wave of 1960s radicalism that swept around Latin America after the triumph of Fidel Castro's 1959 Cuban Revolution. Allende held the presidency for exactly 1000 days, initiating a series of nationalizations and economic reforms with the goal of bringing all levels of society to an equal footing.

Forty years later, the Allende era is described in the same black and white terms that were used in 1973. The political left and the working class masses continue to speak about the era with a nostalgic smile as they remember the incredible feeling of solidarity that swept through the streets as people marched for common ideals and goals. As one education professor described to me, the era was a party in the streets.⁶ However, the political right and economic elite remembers the same era as a time of fear and wariness as they lost economic resources in land reform projects and nationalizations. There was an additional fear of communism, built by the cold war rhetoric of the era; this cold war rhetoric is replicated by the political and economic right in Chile today to justify the coup and the actions of the military dictatorship.

The Pinochet dictatorship assumed power in the midst of economic chaos. Allende had initiated a string of nationalizations that had led to the economic powerhouses of the

⁵ Stern, 283.

⁶ Pelusa, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, 7-30-13.

era's placing an economic embargo on Chile. Additionally, Allende's planned domestic economic policies had slowly brought the economy spiraling down into disorder. By 1973, the year of the coup, there was 500% inflation, massive shortages of goods, and countless worker and transportation strikes. Due to this backdrop of chaos, many Chileans remember a strong sense of relief at the news of the coup, relieved that the increased violence and goods shortages would be ending. However, forty years later, many Chileans who supported the coup admit that although they were initially relieved by the military's intervention, they had no idea that what lay ahead was an incredibly brutal, fearful time.⁷

Almost immediately after assuming power, Pinochet dissolved the political system and constitutional law, replacing both with a military junta. Outright war on Marxism was declared, and Chile was put under a state of siege. In Chile, I heard many accounts of people hiding out during the initial days of military rule, others of fleeing to exile, and others of the atmosphere of tension and fear that suddenly engulfed the nation as the normal television and radio broadcasts were replaced with the harsh, gritty voice of General Pinochet. In Santiago, many remember the eerie sound of the planes that flew over the city, dropping bombs on the presidential palace, *La Moneda*, when President Allende was still inside.

Over the next months and years, the military junta and the DINA, a newly created secret police force, strategically kidnapped, tortured, and disappeared thousands of Chileans while simultaneously building up the reputation of the junta that had "saved Chile from communism" through the media both nationally and internationally. Although on a very small and mostly clandestine scale, these unimaginable violations of human

⁷ Isabel, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, 7-17-13.

rights were criticized as early as 1973 by Catholic Church-based organizations such as the Committee for Peace led by Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez.⁸

Forty years later, it is widely recognized that justice for these crimes against humanity has far from been achieved. Today, one can still encounter their torturer while walking down the street.⁹ The few former military officers that have been put in jail live in luxury in Santiago's finest hotels.¹⁰ The coup's 40th anniversary, like many other years, represents an opportunity to show Chile and the world this lack of justice that continues.

Similar to the continued lack of justice, the ways in which human rights are talked about in Chile forty years later are also unchanged. Those who were tortured or are related to someone who was tortured or disappeared speak out the strongest in the fight for justice. However, the vast majority talks about these concepts as though the words were empty; they hold no personal significance. Those that supported the coup and continue to justify Pinochet's rule through the term "military government" rather than "dictatorship" very loudly communicate that they do not justify in any way, shape, or form the violations of human rights that occurred during dictatorship.¹¹ Only those most closely associated with Pinochet and the military brush off the theme of human rights by stating the statistics found in the 1992 Rettig commission on the detained and disappeared that estimated 3000 deaths and by dismissing the rest as "excesses."¹² The military continues to use the rhetoric of war to justify any deaths. As Commander Alvaro Casanova told me in a personal interview in August 2013, "the military shoots to kill."¹³

⁸ Samuel Chavkin, *Storm Over Chile: The Junta under Siege*, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1989), 131.

⁹ Juanita, interview by author, Santiago, Chile 7-30-13.

¹⁰ Eliana, interview by author, Valparaiso, Chile, 7-22-13.

¹¹ Patricia, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, 8-5-13.

¹² Rodrigo, interview by author, Santiago, Chile 7-29-13.

¹³ Comandante Alvaro Casanova, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, 8-12-13.

While stomping on the human rights of his countrymen, Pinochet put into place two major systematic changes that would outlive his rule and later be called into question in a turbulent moment as the country commemorated the coup's 40th anniversary. The historian Carlos Huneeus describes the Pinochet dictatorship in his book *The Pinochet Regime* as having two faces: one of social repression and human rights abuse and a second of neoliberal economic reform.¹⁴ Beginning in the late 1970s, Pinochet put into place a series of economic reforms designed to pull the country out of the chaotic whirlpool it had sunk into in 1973. The reforms came from the school of thought of Milton Friedman and the University of Chicago and encouraged massive-scale privatization and deregulation.¹⁵ As the government rapidly stepped out of the economy, Chileans watched as basic services such as education, transportation, and healthcare were bought up by foreign companies, becoming less accessible. Additionally, although the economic reforms successfully pulled Chile out of its spiral of economic chaos and is looked on as an economic miracle they dramatically widened the social gap by concentrating power in a few families which dug a deep chasm in Chilean society.

The second systematic change put into place was a constitution in 1980.¹⁶ The constitution was designed to be the legal backbone and source of legitimization to the Pinochet dictatorship. Little did he know that this constitution would be the Achilles heel of his regime.¹⁷ The constitution has been only minimally reformed since the return to democracy in 1990 and continues to be the governing document of Chile.

¹⁴ Carlos Huneeus, *The Pinochet Regime*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 3.

¹⁵ Huneeus, 8.

¹⁶ Huneeus, 226.

¹⁷ Huneeus, 162.

Forty years later, Chileans look back at the dictatorship as a time without colors, when the valley of the Mapocho, where the capital city of Santiago is located, filled up with smog.¹⁸ It was a time where society became more vulgar and consumerism became a base for society, thanks to the implementation of Pinochet's economic model.¹⁹ As Ricardo, a Christian Democrat former Senator and Deputy described to me, the dictatorship was a loss of national identity during which materialism eclipsed socialism and liberalism.²⁰ The reforms being put into place served to alter the mindset of an entire country and reconstructed the backbone of society with a perverse marriage between political, economic, and media power.²¹ As the famous sociologist Tomas Moulian writes, the dictatorship's greatest achievement is that it turned citizens into clients.²² Another older woman described to me that the dictatorship resulted in a blind society that has naturalized terrible things.²³ However, to those the economic reforms greatly benefited, Pinochet was the greatest President Chile has seen in decades, and the word "dictatorship" is only used in conjunction with Allende and Marxism. They commend Pinochet on keeping the country out of two potential wars with neighbors Argentina and Peru, on boosting the economy, and on spearheading the development of the universities and institutions that allow for the comfortable, good life Chileans live today.²⁴

In talking about this era today, Chileans visibly relax and appear very happy as they look back on the event that ended 17 years of dictatorship, the triumph of the No

¹⁸ Lucia, interview by author, Santiago, Chile 7-12-13.

¹⁹ Isabel.

²⁰ Ricardo, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, 8-5-13.

²¹ Pumpkin Head, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, 7-26-13.

²² Tomas Moulian, *Chile Actual: Anatomía de un mito* (Santiago: Arcis Universidad, 1997), 114.

²³ Clara, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, 7-29-13.

²⁴ Rodrigo.

campaign in the 1988 plebiscite.²⁵ In accordance with the 1980 constitution, a referendum was called during which Chileans could vote “yes” or “no” for Pinochet’s continuing in power for 8 more years.²⁶ When the plebiscite date arrived, Pinochet lost, and in order to keep his self-imposed legitimacy, handed power over to the newly elected Christian democrat Patricio Aylwin in 1990, ushering in a period referred to as the “transition.” Aylwin, the leader of a coalition of center-left political parties, the *Concertación*, became a champion of human rights, calling for the first truth and reconciliation commission and doing what he could to jumpstart the limited justice process.²⁷

However, as many of those I talked to in Chile told me while shaking their heads, the transition was inherently limited by being a transition and a justice process “*en la medida de lo posible*” or “in the means of what is possible.”²⁸ This qualification of the transition put a damper on what could actually be done. The transition was also hindered by Pinochet’s continuing presence as head of the armed forces. Although he relinquished presidential power after losing the 1988 plebiscite, hard power was not something he was willing to let go of. In the next four years he twice attempted another coup.²⁹ His prolonged power in the military also put a damper on the justice process, and very few former military officers were convicted.

Since the transition to democracy, there have been various efforts to deal with and talk about the painful past. This rhetoric surges every year on September 11th, and on strategic anniversary years, for example the 25th and 30th anniversaries, memory themes have flooded the public sphere. In December 1998, the year of the coup’s 25th anniversary,

²⁵ Hugo Montenegro Diaz, interview by author, Valparaiso, Chile 11-9-12.

²⁶ Huneeus, 408.

²⁷ Stern, 30.

²⁸ Leopoldo, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, 7-31-13.

²⁹ Stern, 144.

Pinochet was arrested by a Spanish judge while visiting his friend Margaret Thatcher in London on account of human rights violations to Spanish citizens during the dictatorship.³⁰ Although the Rettig commission on the detained-disappeared during the dictatorship had been public information for six years, mass graves continued to be discovered and shown in the news, and human rights violations were becoming increasingly difficult to deny, the strategic anniversary year of 1998 labeled Pinochet as an international criminal and altered the public memory surrounding his person. Pinochet was brought back to Chile for trial, but despite many attempts, never went to court.³¹ This is a very potent example of the bland efforts at reconciliation and highlights the concept of justice “in the means of what is possible.”³²

In 2003 Chile commemorated the coup’s 30th anniversary. The overall sensation of the moment was, “Chile is better off now.”³³ Many remember the commemorative activity of 2003 as being a time full of optimism.³⁴ In 2013, the commemorations do not hold the same level of optimism felt 10 years ago. The most noteworthy act of official commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the coup was the formation of the Valech commission, spearheaded by President Lagos and the Ethical Commission against Torture.³⁵ Where the Rettig looked into disappearance, the Valech looked more broadly at political violence and torture. Individual cases were discussed for a year, and the number of torture cases at the end was 30,000. However, in order to be recognized as a victim by the Valech commission, one had to present evidence of being detained. As this

³⁰ Steve Stern, *Remembering Pinochet’s Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 7.

³¹ Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet’s Chile*, 215.

³² Juanita.

³³ Lucia.

³⁴ Pablo, interview by author, Santiago, Chile 7-17-13.

³⁵ Eliana.

evidence was eliminated by the military and is evidence of too painful a moment for those tortured, evidence was very hard to come by.³⁶ For this reason, many torture victims were not officially recognized. This is another example of the tension surrounding acts commemoration only done “in the means of what is possible.”

2013 is the first major anniversary year since the 30th anniversary in 2003. However, the public memory discourse of the coup, dictatorship, Allende, and Pinochet has been turned inside out over the course of these last 10 years as Pinochet’s reputation has gotten worse. The decade began with the discovery of Pinochet’s secret bank accounts in the New York-based Riggs Bank. The accounts indicated that the dictator had stolen millions of dollars from Chile disguised between multiple bank accounts held by himself and his various children.³⁷ Pinochet’s thievery sent his reputation on a rapid downward spiral in a way that the increasing evidence of his involvement in the state-sponsored apparatus of torture had not even approached.³⁸ Those who had supported him because of the economic gains his policies had led to began to turn away, instead looking to figures such as Jaime Guzman who were Pinochet’s political advisors but separate from the military. This controversial affair was the trigger that led those who had traditionally supported him and his regime to put some distance between themselves and the aging dictator.³⁹ As his public image decayed, so did the dictator who died of a heart attack in 2006. Despite his 1998 arrest and the necessity of a trial, Pinochet was never tried nor determined guilty. He died leaving the country he had ruled with an iron fist more divided over his rule than ever.

³⁶ Jazmin and Morelia, interview by author, Valparaiso, Chile 8-12-13.

³⁷ Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet’s Chile*, 299.

³⁸ Leopoldo.

³⁹ Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet’s Chile*, 301.

The Chile Pinochet left behind had continued in the model he had constructed through systematic economic reforms. Although President Aylwin made many symbolic gestures during his term as president in the early 1990s such as holding a state funeral for Allende, his transition dealt only with the social side of the dictatorship.⁴⁰ The economic model was never touched as Chile was in a moment of economic growth; the systematic roots had grown far too deep to be uprooted.

However, in 2006, even before Pinochet's death, the first questioning of the dictatorship's economic model occurred as students took to the demanding free and better quality education.⁴¹ Although the economic reforms had pulled the economy out of its chaotic state in the 1970s, they dramatically widened the social gap. Today, as a social history professor in Santiago described to me, Chile is half Paris and half the Congo.⁴² The student protests of 2006, dubbed the penguin movement because of the students' uniforms were the first public demonstration against this inequality that had occurred and they were the first protests since the early 1980s. Those protesting had been born into democracy and were mostly high school students. As the coup's 40th anniversary drew closer and as the "penguins" grew up and learned more about their country, the social turbulence that slowly began to burst in 2006 erupted in 2011 into massive social movements that have led to a much deeper criticism of current institutions within Chile.⁴³

Altering the discourse for the anniversary 3 years later, 2010 saw the election of the center-rightist candidate Sebastian Piñera; the most conservative president since the fall of the dictatorship. At the outset of his term, Chileans engaged in a historically charged

⁴⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁴¹ Sara and Daniela, interview by author, Valparaiso, Chile 8-13-13.

⁴² Pablo.

⁴³ Clara.

debate over which term should be used to describe the Pinochet era in history textbooks: “dictatorship”, or “military regime.”⁴⁴ In Spanish, “military regime” has softer connotations, and therefore is much more often used by those that are sympathetic to the coup and Pinochet. “Dictatorship” on the other hand has a very harsh connotations and is used by those who were not at all sympathetic to the coup or who directly experienced in some way the systematic state terror carried out by the regime and its secret police force.

The example of the history textbooks is a very clear example of the memory divide and the level of systematic continuation from the dictatorship era. Similarly, the flood of social movements that erupted in 2011 that began as strictly environmental, education-related, or advocating for indigenous rights have escalated into examples of how Chileans are pointing out flaws and limitations within the system implemented by dictatorship. Each movement highlights the inequality and limitations of Chile’s extreme privatization of public goods, specifically that of education, healthcare, and the natural resources of the south.

This turbulence and “social effervescence”⁴⁵ is the backdrop to the commemorative action of 2013. The past spring and summer has seen a new surge in social movements that is escalating into worker and anti-system protests. Students went on strike again this past summer, canceling classes for 1.5-2 months in June and July. In the midst of this turbulence and in anticipation of the coup’s 40th anniversary, Chileans debated the dictatorship’s legacy. Marches and political graffiti scrawled all over Santiago reference the coup’s 40th anniversary by connecting current societal problems to their roots in the dictatorship’s economic reforms.

⁴⁴ Juanita.

⁴⁵ Lucia.

Commemorative action began in April, 2013. On April 8, Pablo Neruda, the Nobel-Prize winning poet who was also the leader of Chile's Communist Party's body was exhumed from his grave on the central coast of Chile for forensic research that sought to definitively determine whether or not Neruda's death 3 weeks after the military coup was tied to the junta's assumption of power.⁴⁶ In June the debate surged again with the name-change of a major avenue in the community of Providencia in the capital city of Santiago.⁴⁷ Avenue September 11th was changed to Avenue New Providencia, a name that simultaneously represents an end to the glorification of a painful date⁴⁸ and a hiding of history.⁴⁹ The event had a very large presence in the media and provoked reflection on the themes of glorification and denial of Chile's recent past.

With these few exceptions, commemorative action was few and far between until mid-July 2013. On July 18th, the conservative presidential candidate, Pablo Longueira, who had very personal connections to Pinochet dropped out of the race.⁵⁰ He was replaced within the week by Senator Evelyn Matthei, pitting her against the former Concertación President Michelle Bachelet in the race for office.⁵¹ These two candidates were referred to by every major television channel the week following Matthei's candidacy

⁴⁶ "Chile exhuma el cuerpo de Pablo Neruda para saber si fue asesinado," *CNN Español*, 4-8-13, <http://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2013/04/08/chile-exhuma-el-cuerpo-de-pablo-neruda-para-saber-si-fue-asesinado/?iref=allsearch>

⁴⁷ Pia Serralta, "Av. 11 de Septiembre cambiará de nombre: concejales de Providencia revelan y justifican sus votos." *La Tercera*, 6-21-13, <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/nacional/2013/06/680-529391-9-los-ultimos-dias-de-la-av-11-de-septiembre-concejales-de-providencia-aprobarian.shtml>

⁴⁸ Sergio

⁴⁹ Fernando Vergara, personal communication, 7-8-13.

⁵⁰ Jose Morgado, Prensa nacional califica como "terremoto" bajada de Longueira," *24 horas*, 7-18-13, <http://www.24horas.cl/politica/decision2013/prensa-internacional-califica-como-terremoto-bajada-de-longueira-750378>

⁵¹ "BBC: Matthei y Bachelet, Mujer contra Mujer en Chile," *BBC Mundo*, 7-21-13, <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/mundo/bbc-mundo/2013/07/1433-533946-9-bbc-matthei-y-bachelet-mujer-contra-mujer-en-chile.shtml>.

announcement as “the daughters of the generals.”⁵² Both Matthei and Bachelet are the daughters of former air force generals that represent two polarized experiences of the coup and dictatorship. General Bachelet died of a heart attack induced by torture in the air force hospital while General Matthei may have had something to do with Bachelet’s death. The two candidates’ backgrounds and experiences with dictatorship added an additional level of relevancy to the public memory debate. The presidential race between these two candidates highlights incredibly strongly the tensions and bipolarity of public memory in Chile. As Leopoldo, a guide at the former clandestine torture house *Londres* 38 told me, “the election embodies the conflict of forty years.”⁵³

From this point forward, memory themes became increasingly prominent in the media, in the narrative of the street through graffiti and protests, and served to show the government that some official act of commemoration was more than necessary in the political and social hurricane that was descending over the coup’s 40th anniversary.

In addition to the planned academic conferences, book releases, concert series, and film festivals, the days and weeks leading up to the coup’s anniversary on Wednesday, September 11 filled with questions, apologies, and new information coming to light. In mid-August, the son of two disappeared in Argentina was discovered, grandson number 109 to the grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo who have been searching for the children of the disappeared for decades.⁵⁴ Grandson number 109 was Chilean; his parents were killed by the transnational terrorist operation Operation Condor that crossed borders and killed Chilean exiles that were sympathetic to Allende. Another major discovery was the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Leopoldo

⁵⁴ “El nieto 109 de las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo es Chileno,” *El Pais*, 8-8-13, http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/08/08/actualidad/1375936372_164017.html.

lawsuit that was filled against the man who allegedly shot and killed the famous radical folk singer Victor Jara in Chile Stadium five days after the coup.⁵⁵

With only 2 weeks to go before the anniversary itself, newspapers and social media sites inflated with the news story that former armed forces commander in chief Juan Emilio Cheyre had declared himself guilty of handing over Bernardo Lejderman, the child of murdered leftists for adoption.⁵⁶ Lejderman's parents were killed as part of the same transnational Operation Condor as the parents of grandson #109. Operation Condor was so carefully hidden by the military government, that news of Cheyre's declarations shocked the public.

Shortly following news of Cheyre's declaration, the senator and president of Chile's most conservative party, Hernán Larraín formally apologized for his supporting the Pinochet dictatorship.⁵⁷ This apology, given at the release of a book entitled "Voices of Reconciliation" shows the extent to which conservative Chile has isolated itself from the dictator, but also highlights the greater questioning of Chile's system and institutions implemented during dictatorship. Less than a week later, the judicial system had also issued an apology for the judiciary's lack of action during the 1970s and 1980s with regards to human rights.⁵⁸ This unprecedented string of apologies illustrates either a strong desire to improve public opinion through owning up to the past as the election

⁵⁵ "La familia de Victor Jara demandó en EE.UU. al militar acusado de su crimen," *SoyChile*, 9-5-13, <http://www.soychile.cl/Santiago/Policial/2013/09/05/198330/La-familia-de-Victor-Jara-demando-en-EEUU-al-militar-acusado-de-su-crimen.aspx>.

⁵⁶ "Las dos declaraciones del ex general Juan Emilio Cheyre en el caso Lejderman." *La Tercera*. 8-22-13. <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/nacional/2013/08/680-538939-9-las-dos-declaraciones-del-ex-general-juan-emilio-cheyre-en-el-caso-lejderman.shtml>

⁵⁷ "Hernan Larrain: Pido perdon. Esto es mi voz de reconciliacion," *24 horas*, August 27, 2013. <http://www.24horas.cl/politica/hernan-larrain-pido-perdon-es-mi-voz-para-la-reconciliacion-811360>

⁵⁸ "Chile judges apologise for past role after coup." *BBC News*, 9/4/13. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-23967816>

looms closer or a tangible change in societal perceptions of public memory or Chilean society as a whole.

In the same weeks as these official parties, numerous major national television channels put together and broadcast special programs on the history or memories of the coup. The Catholic University of Chile owned Channel 13 put together a program called “The 1000 days” that depicts the history of Allende’s presidency and the Popular Unity era.⁵⁹ The overall mood of the show is one of fear, portraying 1970-1973 in Chile as a very frightening time, subliminally forcing Chileans to be thankful for the current era with its political stability and material wealth. The national television channel 24 hours put together a program entitled “this is how I lived the 11th” in which witnesses recount their memories of the coup.⁶⁰ The program seems like an effort to capture testimonies, but is a very watered down selection of testimonies. The television programs fit right into the bubbling whitewater leading up to the class-three rapid of September 11th, however presents a limited viewpoint as the television channels are owned by those that traditionally advocate for Pinochet.

As plans for official state commemorations within the presidential palace and plans for demonstrations on September 11th took shape, the public memory river rose and the current picked up. As September 11th dawned, there was an increased police presence in the streets as heavy protesting was extremely likely to occur.⁶¹ Congress held a minute of silence for the disappeared and President Piñera held a formal act of commemoration at

⁵⁹ *Los Mil Dias*, Canal 13, 8-25-13.

⁶⁰ *Así viví el 11 de septiembre, 24 horas*, <http://www.ahoranoticias.cl/noticiario/reportajes/asi-vivi-el-11:-capitulo-4-adios-a-las-armas.html>.

⁶¹ “Redoblan presencia de carabineros de civil para prevenir violencia por el 11,” *El Mercurio*, 9-10-13, <http://impresa.elmercurio.com/Pages/SearchResults.aspx?ST=11+de+septiembre&SF=&SD=&ED=&NewsID=167309&IsExternalSite=False>

La Moneda in which he proclaimed all of Chile responsible for actions during the dictatorship, indicating a collective project of reconciliation and living in harmony.⁶²

While Piñera talked in *La Moneda*, on the streets there were thousands that formed a human chain around a large sector of the city, lying down to represent the fallen *desaparecidos*.⁶³ Others marched through the streets carrying images of the disappeared⁶⁴, many attended a public vigil at the Museum of Memory and Human Rights⁶⁵, as well as commemorative events at other memory sites and activities and debates within many universities.⁶⁶ However, none of this appeared in the media. The day after, *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, two of the most prominent daily papers in Chile owned by the conservative elite talked about the injury of police officer Juan Bustamante Araya in clashes on the streets.⁶⁷ An article in *La Tercera* details Bustamante's injuries yet never mentions the protest itself. Similarly, *El Mercurio* highlights the burning of public buses and the injury of the same police officer while never mentioning the circumstances or type of protest.

These tensions displayed by Chile's two biggest daily newspapers shows another side of "in the means of what is possible." This type of reporting is an example of the denial and forgetting that continues to plague Chile, forty years later. It is skewed towards those who supported and benefitted from the coup, leaving out the masses that have continually

⁶² Jose Morgado, "Piñera y el golpe: hay responsabilidades compartidas," *24 horas*, 9-11-13, <http://www.24horas.cl/especial11desepiembre/pinera-y-el-golpe-hay-responsabilidades-compartidas-833832>

⁶³ "Acción masiva, #quererNOver" *Facebook*, 9-10-13, <https://www.facebook.com/events/508289052592272/>

⁶⁴ Juanita

⁶⁵ Camila, interview by author, Santiago, Chile 7-28-13.

⁶⁶ Pelusa.

⁶⁷ Angelica Baeza Palavecino, "11 de Septiembre: Carabinero más grave fue herido donde asesinaron a cabo Cristián Vera," *La Tercera*, 9-12-13, <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/nacional/2013/09/680-542318-9-11-de-septiembre-carabinero-mas-grave-fue-herido-donde-asesinaron-a-cabo.shtml>.

been left in the dust as the market consolidates wealth in a few families and in certain sectors of certain cities. By not reporting on the protests, events that starkly present these inequalities, the ruling class that continues to defend Pinochet essentially tells its vast readership that these events aren't happening. This example additionally shows what the history professor Lucia described to me, that the media approach is to leave the past in the past.⁶⁸

Curiously enough, despite the unique flood of apologies, television programs and media coverage, and official recognitions, September 11th was full of protest, but no more than what occurs every year. In Valparaiso, the city in which the coup was initiated in 1973, there was no protest. However, this "September memory season,"⁶⁹ as this time of year is referred to by the historian Steve Stern, is not quite over. The legacies of the presidential candidates bring this discourse into the spotlight whether or not they intend to. Additionally, the heightened social movements and protests calling attention to holes and flaws within the dictatorship's continued model have demands that the candidates and next administrations will need to take into consideration. As History professor "Javier" told me, the social movements are direct legacy of unresolved problems that tie directly to the construction of the state in the 1970s.⁷⁰ Looking ahead to the elections, Chile sincerely hopes that these unresolved problems and the needs of the masses will be taken into consideration. It is widely assumed that Michelle Bachelet will win the election. For many, Michelle Bachelet represents a hopeful new social order and Evelyn Matthei represents a continuation of the past. However, the path Chile will take and the extent to which change is possible will not be evident until November. Upon the

⁶⁸ Lucia

⁶⁹ Steve Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet's Chile*, 283.

⁷⁰ Javier, interview by author, Santiago, Chile 7-12-13.

conclusion of Chile's next presidential election, a clearer picture of how Chile will move forward from or continue with the model rooted in dictatorship will likely come into focus.

For a majority of Chileans, the coup's 40th anniversary has presented an opportunity for reflection and remembering and an opportunity to reinforce democracy.⁷¹ As the social movements indicate and as was described to me by Pablo, a social historian at the University of Chile, Chile is still "playing on the court of the dictatorship."⁷² The social demands have escalated into a need for systematic change.⁷³ The coup's 40th anniversary also poses a challenge, to deal with the political and social legacies of dictatorship⁷⁴ and to not wait another forty years to change the system.⁷⁵ As the very prominent history professor Sergio bluntly puts it, Chile today is a direct legacy of the dictatorship.⁷⁶ This year's 40th anniversary called attention to that very clearly, however the action and reporting of September 11th itself that sweeps the events of the painful date under the rug. This "September memory season"⁷⁷ will continue to November. Perhaps the turbulent waters that led up to the anniversary itself will once again define the public memory discourse in this strategic anniversary and election year. Perhaps in the wake of somewhat obligatory official commemorations, the public memory discourse will be pushed out by the media and the state. Forty years later, the public memory discourse and the ways in which the past manifests itself is beginning to change with a rising tide of

⁷¹ Pumpkin Head

⁷² Pablo

⁷³ Eliana

⁷⁴ Manu75

⁷⁵ Sebastian, interview by author, Valparaiso, Chile, 8-16-13.

⁷⁶ Sergio

⁷⁷ Steve Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet's Chile*, 283.

criticism. Chile is approaching the top of the roller coaster, yet the direction it will take after November still remains unknown.

*This project is continuing through the semester and will become my History 400 thesis.

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