

A Chilean Exile's Difficult Odyssey

Government atrocities and massive protests mark the slow decline of a fascist dictatorship

Chile, one of the two South American countries still under military dictatorship, is changing. It is almost 13 years since terror and anxiety became the only possible way of life for Chileans. Today, thousands of men and women are protesting in the streets in search of a dream that has not vanished despite the state of siege: the return to democracy.

The military today are forced to face their own doings: economic bankruptcy, misery, prostitution, illiteracy and the loss without trace of what was once a sovereign and democratic country. The grassroots opposition not

only has the strength to survive the repression and imprisonment of its leaders, it also finds new forms of struggle and expression. Not even the state of exception is capable of imposing total silence on the press, and political parties are unifying against the regime that overthrew constitutional president Salvador Allende.

"When I returned, Chile was no longer the country I had known." Exiled in Mexico for ten years, Ximena Ortúzar returned to her country in October of 1983. Ximena had been one of the most enthusiastic young television journalists, and was part of the editorial board of the state-owned publishing firm, Quimantú (sun of wisdom.) She was also a reporter for the magazine *Paloma*, aimed

at housewives who suffered the effects of the international economic boycott set up by governments opposed to Salvador Allende.

The Popular Unity government (Unidad Popular) published literary classics through Quimantú. Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Dickens, to mention but a few, were read during work-breaks in factories, in school and at home. At the time, Chile had a population of 10 million. By 1973 Quimantú had sold some 10 million books, an impressive record that surpassed even some of the developed countries.

"The military junta took over Quimantú after the coup; they burned its books and we were all dismissed from our jobs. We never returned. Now the government publishes nothing," says Ximena, "and publishing activity died a natural death. The country's economic situation is so bad that people don't even have enough

MANUEL GALAZ
PRESIDENTE CODEAU
NO DETENDRAN
NUESTRA ACCION
(pág. 6)

TAMBIÉN HAY
UNIFORMES QUE EL
PUEBLO PUEDE LUGR
CON ORGULLO...
EL UNIFORME DEL UCEU...
POR SIEMPRE.

margarita

FORTINMAPOCHO Fundado el 24.11.1947
Edición 121
5 de agosto de 1983
Precio \$ 50
(Recargar sobre \$ 110)

FRENTE A CASO DE DEGOLLADOS. AFIRMAN DIRIGENTES.

TODO EL REGIMEN DEBE RESPONDER

Como es natural, el chcolo se va desgranando así lo sostuvo el general Mendoza al momento de renunciar.

templias
Informaciones en
pág. 8, 9 y 10

SECUESTRADORES BURLAN A LA JUSTICIA (pág. 6)
Caso Randolph: ENTREVISTA ESPECIAL AL ABOGADO DE LA FAMILIA (pág. 10)
Penalones de FF AA. LOS PRIVILEGIOS DEL PODER (pág. 11)
AFP. SE RATIFICA INHUMANIDAD DEL SISTEMA (pág. 12)
Documento TEXTO COMPLETO INFORME SANOVAS

Despite repression, the opposition paper, *Fortín Mapocho* resists.

money to buy a newspaper. Many of us who worked at Quimantú are in exile, others were imprisoned, others were murdered."

Did Ximena Ortúzar go into exile voluntarily? Just a few days after the military takeover the new government flashed Ximena's picture on television and demanded that the people denounce bad Chileans like her. "There was an order out for my arrest," Ximena tells us. "I knew I could end up in the National Stadium where thousands of Chileans were concentrated and never be heard from again. And the lives of my four children were my responsibility."

As in other cases, Ximena's capture could also lead to the apprehension of her fellow oppositionists. "What can I say? As I sit here in my home I can imagine they could run a train over me and I wouldn't give anyone away. But when you know that a woman was raped by fourteen soldiers in a single night, when a political prisoner tells you how he was handcuffed and tied to a chair while his wife and five-year old son were raped in front of him, or when they're pointing a gun at your head, would you or wouldn't you talk? My friends said. 'You can stay in Chile, but you must be aware of the risks, your life is more valuable in exile.' What could I do? Stay there and see what would happen?"

A somber chapter in history unfolded after 1973. Five thousand political and labor leaders were murdered during the first 75 hours after the coup, just in the city of Santiago. The junta shut down Congress and took over all state powers. Labor unions were banned, and the government assaulted and confiscated all the belongings of the Worker's Central. Unions were remorselessly persecuted and their open activity became impossible.

Ximena Ortúzar never imagined the odyssey she

would live through over the next ten years. She boarded a plane bound for Mexico, and with her four children faced the shock of exile suffered by a million other Chileans. They would no longer see the Aconcagua volcano that rises above the Andes, nor would she see her mother and the old family home in Santiago. It would be ten long years before she could walk down the shaded avenues that Allende envisioned full of free men, shortly before his death.

The huge protest demonstrations that began in 1983 heralded Chileans's loss of fear, and military authorities were forced to allow the return of some exiles, among them Ximena and her children. The list authorizing her return in June of that year, was the government's response to the first national protest called in May by the National Worker's Leadership. "I believed it was my duty to relieve some of the Chileans who had endured the dictatorship for so many years and who had sustained a heroic struggle to rescue democracy," said Ximena.

Ximena and her family arrived in Santiago de Chile in October. "People were out in the streets, risking their lives to shout 'Down with Pinochet!' I knew then that something was still alive. History is curious, sometimes. The democratic project is not forgotten despite muzzles, death and bombs."

Thus, back in her country, Ximena became a journalist again. There was no opposition newspaper in Chile at the time. Since it is forbidden to report on strikes, demonstrations or the activities of the resistance, publications frequently appear with blank pages or spaces because of censorship. So, along with other journalists, Ximena founded the only legal daily that sides with progressive struggles against general Pinochet's government.

A peaceful-looking old man turned up one autumn afternoon at the office of Jorge Lavanderos, a Christian Democrat leader. He handed over an envelope containing the official legal registration papers of a sports daily, valid since 1943. The newspaper was *Fortín Mapocho*, the name of a soccer team, and it had gone unnoticed when all other dailies had been suppressed.

The old man needed money but had been unwilling to sell his registration to just anyone. He wanted someone who would make a unified opposition newspaper out of his sports daily.

Ximena recalls: "What would you think of having an opposition newspaper?, I said to Jorge Lavanderos. 'It's a midsummer night's dream,' he said, 'but we've been unable to do it for ten years.' Well, now we can do it, I said. 'You're crazy! How can you even imagine such a thing?'"

But Ximena was right. The military junta couldn't stop the publication of a daily that had been legally registered since 1943 without breaking its own laws. So, enthusiastic journalists decided they would work without wages. They found a press that would print the paper, they devised legal distribution mechanisms and a style of writing that could bypass the censors.

The first issue was printed in March of 1984 and ran 100,000 copies which sold out in two hours. The junta shut down the newspaper, broke into the printing press and took the editors, Lavandero and Ximena Ortúzar, to court. The case reached the Court of Appeals, which took into account the complaint presented by *Fortín Mapocho's* owners and came up with a surprising decision: the newspaper was legal, and its circulation could not be prohibited. The defendants were extatic, they had won their legal battle.

The junta shut down the newspaper again after its second issue. The editors took the case to the Supreme Court, and the five judges unanimously declared that the paper was legal.

A rumor circulated in Chile at the time about a house built by General Pinochet in a valley at the foot of the Andes. The mansion, known as "the little house on the prairie," was located in the town of Melocotón.

"One day some one came to *Fortín Mapocho* and told us that we could prove that Pinochet had usurped state-owned lands by checking the deeds in the Public Registry. His purchase of the mansion was a fraud against the nation. We hired a team of legal advisors who very cautiously obtained copies of the deed. We found that Pinochet had expropriated the lands for government use. The property was then purchased by an army colonel and sold to Pinochet in a private transaction. There was fraud against the nation."

The documents were handed over to Jorge Lavanderos, the legal owner of *Fortín Mapocho*. Lavanderos left his office one tragic evening, with the documents in his briefcase. He got into his car and headed home to analyze them carefully. Little did he know that he would soon embark on a futile escape attempt.

"Jorge noticed he was being followed by 12 men in two cars without license plates and with radio antennas. He was intercepted after a desperate chase through the streets of Santiago. The briefcase containing the documents on 'the little house in the prairie' was taken from him, and he was beaten with rubber-covered steel clubs."

The medical report following the attack on Jorge Lavanderos stated that the inner bones in his left ear

had been ruptured, leaving him permanently deaf; there was displacement of the cerebral mass, a fractured skull and epilepsy. The military junta immediately decreed a state of emergency and banned all newspaper publications that had not previously passed censorship.

Fortín Mapocho's lawyers got another copy of the

agree with hounding communists, but we will not stand for a thieving government." Some in the military said they could not stand the accusations of stealing and corruption. There were unprecedented reactions because never before had a Chilean head of state been accused of corruption.

Ximena Ortúzar entered



Journalist leaving the Presidential Palace of La Moneda (Santiago) after demanding freedom for Catholic priest Renato Hevia and two other photographers.

deeds. The documents were annexed to the copy of the newspaper's next edition, sent to the authorities for permission to publish. There was no editorial comment on the matter.

"Some of our people were opposed to publishing the material. Yet public deeds in themselves could not be classified as journalistic material, so the junta couldn't censor them without creating a legal scandal. Our front-page headline would read 'The documents of Jorge Lavanderos, who was nearly killed when his briefcase was stolen.' The authorities returned our package untouched. All of Chile would know that Augusto Pinochet was guilty of fraud."

The 114,000 copies we ran of *Fortín Mapocho* sold out in two hours. Conservative politicians declared: "We

another difficult stage of her life. Her children were threatened, her home was shot at and there were numerous wordless attempts against her, warnings that her stay in Chile meant death. So Ximena and her four children returned to Mexico in November, 1985.

Other men and women will walk down the streets of Santiago, will work zealously and read Dickens, Dostoyevsky and Shakespeare. The copper plundered by foreign companies will once again belong to Chileans, some day. General Pinochet's regime will be just another somber page in the history books. Some day this woman's children will once more breathe the aroma of the araucarias along Santiago's beautiful avenues.★

Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán