



PROJECT MUSE®

Holding the Junta Accountable: Chile's "Sitios de Memoria"
and the History of Torture, Disappearance, and Death

Teresa A. Meade

Radical History Review, Issue 79, Winter 2001, pp. 123-139 (Article)

Published by Duke University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/30212>

Holding the Junta Accountable: Chile's "Sitios de Memoria" and the History of Torture, Disappearance, and Death

Teresa Meade

Under the banner headline "Unexpected Vistas in Chile," the travel section of the January 20, 2000, Sunday *New York Times* sought to lure both the adventurous and the sedate to a country of fabulous mountain resorts, lush rainforests, health spas, fine wines, and European-like cities. Nonetheless, Chile's association with military rule, and the fame of its ex-dictator, Augusto Pinochet, were considered well enough known to the informed tourist so as to merit oblique references in several of the featured articles. Inserted in Edward Hower's piece on studying Spanish and living in Chile's capital city of Santiago, right after his account of a night enjoying folk music in the clubs, but before his description of his walk among the wealthy mausoleums in the aristocratic section of the municipal cemetery, is a description of the "memorial that has been erected to those who were executed and 'disappeared' during General Pinochet's dictatorship. On a slab of white stone about three stories tall, several thousand names are inscribed."¹ He writes little more about the wall, except to point to it as place where Chileans commemorate their troubled past, and to compare it with the Vietnam Memorial wall in Washington, D.C. In a separate travel piece on the hot springs and health resorts of central Chile, Annick Smith comments: "My companion, Bill, drove while I navigated, both of us a bit frightened, for we were venturing down a foreign road in a country a mere handful of years beyond police-state status, and had only a rudimentary knowledge of the Spanish language."²

Radical History Review

Issue 79 (winter 2001): 123–39

Copyright 2001 by MARHO: The Radical Historians' Organization, Inc.

Their fears were unfounded, we discover, as they explored lovely spas and peaceful rural towns in the shadow of the Andean peaks.

If Chile's transition from dictatorship to democracy bears mentioning among the well-photographed articles enticing the tourist to its luscious rainforests, endless beaches, and ski resorts, one would presume that an appraisal of the historic events of the 1970s and 1980s infuses the national consciousness. However, a closer look at the way Chile is constructing the memory of the military period and portraying in museums and national markers the recent history of human rights abuses reveals a deeply contradictory and tentative historical account.

From 1973 until 1990, Chile endured one of Latin America's most repressive military governments. Then in 1990, lulled into allowing a referendum on his future as president because he was convinced the electorate would keep him, General Augusto Pinochet instead found himself voted out of office. The 1990s marked the beginning of Chile's transition from dictatorship to democracy, as thousands of exiles returned from their years of asylum in Europe, Canada, and the United States, and a coalition of Christian Democrats, Socialists, and other parties came to power in a government called the Concertación. Throughout the 1990s, a Christian Democrat held the presidency, but in January of this year Chile's transition entered a new phase with the election of Socialist Party candidate Ricardo Lagos to the presidency and leadership of the Concertación. Although the first Socialist to win the presidency since Salvador Allende's victory in 1970, Lagos ran on a platform of moderate reforms more similar to European social democracy than Allende's Unidad Popular socialism.

Chile's center-left democracy that seeks to blend free-market economics with increased spending on social programs is something of a political and economic laboratory. This uneasy balance between reconciling the goals of Allende's democratic socialism with Pinochet's brutal neoliberalism hangs precariously in the political arena and infuses the current debate over public history, especially the extent to which and how the martyrs of the dictatorship should be remembered. Beginning in the early 1990s, the democratic government erected a number of historical markers, called *sitios de memoria* or memory sites, to remember those who had suffered and died under the military's rule. These memory sites are public monuments, memorials, and parks that commemorate, pay homage to, and seek to place into the public record the memory of the thousands of people who were disappeared, killed, and tortured after General Pinochet seized power on September 11, 1973.³

While pointing to the horrors of the military era from 1973–90, the memory sites nonetheless exist within a society that has not reached any form of reconciliation with the dictatorship, nor held accountable those who carried out its most egregious acts of violence. Similar to the preserved concentration camps in Germany or the opening of Robbin Island in South Africa, Chile's memory sites demonstrate the

cost in lives and human suffering of antidemocratic and dictatorial regimes. As opposed to postwar Germany and postapartheid South Africa, however, Chile has had few trials of its war criminals, and the public airing of past human rights violations contained in the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation (Rettig Commission) resulted in the conviction of only General Manuel Contreras Sepúlveda for the 1976 assassination of the Unidad Popular Minister Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C., and of Colonel Pedro Espinoza Bravo, the DINA's (Directorate of National Intelligence) second in command. Military leaders and members of the Pinochet dictatorship enjoy a self-declared amnesty; the doctors who assisted the military torturers continue to practice medicine; the camp guards, military officers, and functionaries of the torture apparatus live in Chile, most drawing hefty military pensions for their years of service to the *patria*. Events of the recent past, especially the arrest in England and attempted extradition to Spain of General Pinochet to stand trial for human rights violations, and the election of Socialist Ricardo Lagos to the presidency of Chile, hold out hope that Chilean courts will be forced to hear the many accusations against torturers. In the wake of Pinochet's return to Chile, charges have been brought against several military junta members, although it remains to be seen if they will be convicted and punished.⁴ The memory sites thus exist as monuments to the contradictions of Chilean society and to the fragility of its democracy.



The Main House of Villa Grimaldi, Santiago. “Cuartel Terranova” was the military code name assigned to the torture center.

Foremost among the sites is Villa Grimaldi, an old villa on the edge of Chile's capital city of Santiago, which the military transformed into a major torture center from 1974–78. About 5,000 prisoners passed through Villa Grimaldi, and it is known that 240 of them were killed or disappeared. In 1995, Villa Grimaldi was commemorated as “Peace Park” and stands today as the only “memorial” of torture in Latin America. Whereas in Argentina there have been trials and convictions of members of the military who carried out the “Dirty War” that resulted in the death, disappearance, and torture of thousands from 1974–83, there is no preserved site one can

visit to learn about the torture methods.⁵ By contrast, in Chile, Villa Grimaldi stands as a remembrance of what the torturers did, while the members of the military government enjoy an amnesty from conviction for any crimes committed during the dictatorship. In addition to Villa Grimaldi, there are other monuments in the Santiago General Cemetery, including “The Memorial for the Disappeared”; “Patio 29,” a potter’s field in the rear of the cemetery where bodies were dumped by the military government, buried in graves marked “NN” (*no nombre*, or no name); nearby the grave of Victor Jara, the well-known folk singer and early martyr of the dictatorship; and finally, the monument and tomb for former President Salvador Allende and his family.⁶

While the memory sites are open to the public, without an informed guide it is questionable that the average international tourist, or even Chilean resident, could learn much history from visiting them. As such, the current democratic government has fulfilled an obligation to commemorate the memory of the victims of the military regime, but has not stepped into the volatile territory of drawing lessons from the brutality and human rights violations that regime carried out. To take the next step, to provide informed comments at the sites, to make available pamphlets or audio guides that explained what the military had done, would move toward assigning blame to the Pinochet government, something that to date has been approached gingerly in Chile and has only been attempted by the Spanish magistrate, Baltasar Garzón. Indeed, Judge Garzón’s failed effort to extradite Pinochet from England to stand trial in Spain for the torture and murder of Spanish citizens who were in Chile during the military government was opposed by the Chilean government. If the move to prosecute the torturers in Chile has been halting thus far, the steps to commemorate the victims of torture and death have not set a much faster pace. The moderate Concertación government has provided for some remembrance for the families of the disappeared, killed, and tortured, but has so far refused to follow up with the educational materials that would encase the existence of torture into the historic memory of Chileans. Many Chileans, one might argue, are content to remain oblivious to the excesses of the military era. Ironically, most of the well-known monuments to the disappeared and to the Allende government are in a cemetery, a place that marks dead memories.

My tour of these memory sites was conducted by Pedro Matta, a former student leader in the 1970s when he was in the law school of the University of Chile, Santiago, and a member of the Socialist Youth (the youth wing of the Socialist Party). Matta had worked for two years after the coup with a number of clandestine groups attempting to rebuild student, trade union, peasant, and community organizations destroyed in the military repression. In May 1975, he was arrested and held in Villa Grimaldi and other detention centers, first as a “disappeared” person (whereabouts

unknown and arrest unacknowledged) and later as a recognized political prisoner (but he was never charged). Thirteen months later, in July 1976, he was released and granted asylum in the United States. After more than a decade in New York and California, Matta returned to Chile, where, as a leader of the National Organization of Ex-Political Prisoners, he devotes his time to building the memory sites as recognized locales in Chile. Reconstructing the history of the torture centers, conducting investigations into the lives of those who have been disappeared and killed, and seeking reparations for torture victims and their families are key parts of his work.

According to Matta, Chile has had a particular experience and it is essential that the younger generation be made aware of the impact the military has had (and continues to have) on their nation's history and on the lives of so many of its citizens.⁷ Unfortunately, Matta has found little support for his efforts inside Chile. He operates on a shoestring budget, has no institutional backing, and perseveres despite a widespread sentiment that the ugly days of the military regime should simply be forgotten. Nonetheless, Matta contends that there can be no talk of justice in Chile until there is an accounting for what happened in the 1970s and 1980s, and indeed, there can be little guarantee against those dark days returning. "We cannot just go forward as if nothing happened," he asserts.⁸

Villa Grimaldi, the first stop on my guided tour with Pedro Matta, was established in early 1974 as an experimental detention center that later developed into one of the most systematic sites for the use of torture in Latin America. Although it is still not known how many torture centers existed in all of Chile, it is believed that there were eighty-seven in Santiago alone, of which Villa Grimaldi was one of the most well developed. The villa compound, with the main house, surrounding farm buildings, and grounds, stood in the midst of an agricultural area. Built in the nineteenth century by José Arrieta, a Uruguayan-born aristocrat, it had passed before 1973 to the ownership of Emilio Vasallo, who had used it as a weekend house where he and his family entertained friends and, paradoxically, a number of well-known left intellectuals, including Pablo Neruda, Gabriel García Márquez, and Fidel Castro. Today there are houses nearby and the street in front is fairly well traveled, but in the 1970s the military acquired the property because it was isolated from Santiago but near a small military airstrip, the Tobalada Airfield.

In 1974, the villa was appropriated by the Directorate of National Intelligence (DINA), the agency engaged in detaining and interrogating prisoners. The DINA transformed it into a torture center in July and operated it as its most important center in Santiago until February 1978.⁹ Villa Grimaldi completely ceased operations as a military installation during the 1980s, possibly as a result of increasing international scrutiny of the Pinochet dictatorship and escalating worldwide condemnation of the military's use of torture. With operations moved elsewhere, the villa passed to the



The Villa Grimaldi National Historic Site (“Peace Park”). Santiago, 1999.

CNI (the National Intelligence Council), the successor of the DINA. In 1987, near the end of Pinochet’s dictatorship, the last head of the CNI, General Hugo Salas Wenzel, sold Villa Grimaldi to his wife, his sister, and her husband, who owned a construction company. They obtained permission to level the buildings in order to construct a high-priced condominium complex on the site. After they had leveled the buildings, but before they were able to erect the condominiums, the press got wind of the story and mounted a campaign not only exposing the official graft involved, but uncovering the history of torture that had occurred at Villa Grimaldi. Shortly after the democratic transition in 1990, Villa Grimaldi was turned back to the government and commemorated as a historic “Peace Park” in 1995. Today Villa Grimaldi is a lovely park with gardens, sculptures, and flowers, but marked throughout with brick plaques and stones naming the various “stations” of the torture (cubicles, electric torture rooms, bathrooms, etc.). The military succeeded in destroying the physical evidence of torture, but Pedro Matta and other historians have been able to piece together a history of the detention experience through interviews with ex-detainees, and even from the accounts of a few guards who worked there.

Matta's method of leading us through the site was to reproduce, and even reenact where possible, the day-to-day operations of the torture center. He put himself in the place of the prisoner (as indeed he had been) and demonstrated the various workings of the site. In this way, Matta called on us to imagine what had been there before by describing in minute detail the buildings, the torture devices, the location of guards, the entrance and exit of prisoners and the military, and even the hierarchy of prisoners. We began with the gate where the trucks entered the grounds and proceeded through the entire park. Beginning in 1974, prisoners were brought to the nearby airstrip and from there they were loaded onto trucks and brought the short distance to Villa Grimaldi. Those brought via the airfield were combined with the people who were trucked in from neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and universities throughout the city. The trucks pulled up to a wooden gate, which remains today, complete with the sliding door that had enabled the guards to check the identity of the driver and his cargo. The prisoners, all with arms tied behind their backs and blindfolded, were unloaded in much the same way that livestock had been delivered to the villa when it was a country estate. According to testimonies from ex-prisoners, six agents "greeted" the arrivals with clubs. They were then taken to the "grill," a converted metal-frame bed, where they were subjected to one to one-and-a-half hours of electric shock torture, not quite enough to kill them. Those who did pass out or suffered heart attacks were revived by torturers (trained by military physicians) who either threw cold water on the victims or performed CPR to keep them alive. Variations on the standard shock torture included turning the "rack" of the bed upside down or conducting the torture in front of the prisoner's friends and family members who were also being held.

Matta's tour elaborated on the sketchy explanations on the brick markers throughout the park, most of which simply labeled pieces of lawn as "location of torture chamber," "dormitory for detainees," "room for electrical shock torture," and so forth. From his own memory, from the accounts of other prisoners, and with the help of ex-DINA agents who were involved with the operation of Villa Grimaldi, Matta



Pedro Matta at the original gate to Villa Grimaldi, demonstrating the peephole through which guards identified the incoming trucks loaded with prisoners when the villa was a torture center. Santiago, 1999.



Stone markers in Villa Grimaldi that indicate “Torture Chamber.”

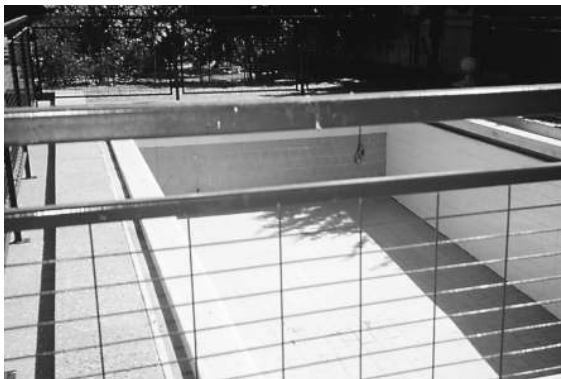
has reconstructed a detailed plan of the villa’s buildings and grounds when it was used as a torture center. In addition, Matta has obtained the blueprints of the villa and a map of the grounds from the time that it belonged to the Vasallo family. The room that had served as the foreman’s headquarters in the days of the villa was made into a dormitory of bunk beds, crammed tightly together with no room to sit up and barely room to walk around. This, along with the converted garage, old water tower and a few other buildings, became the detainees’ permanent homes, places from which they were taken only at mealtime at noon for lunch and at 7 P.M. for dinner, when they were brought out and seated blindfolded, eight at a time, on a small wall to eat in silence with their heads always down. Twice a day, according to Matta, they were taken to the bathroom, allowed thirty seconds in it, and then returned to their bunks to await the periodic torture sessions. Twenty percent of the detainees were women, whose treatment was the same as the men’s except that they were raped as well as tortured. The prisoners were blindfolded at all times and never allowed to talk, but they did succeed in murmuring to each other while in line for the bathroom or at some other times. Those moments of interaction Matta remembers as crucial to maintaining his sanity.

Other brick markers in the park indicate the *sala de tortura* (torture room) again without explanation. Matta filled in the missing story with descriptions of the types of torture used: having a plastic bag filled with water, feces, or urine held tightly over the prisoners’ heads until they almost passed out; being suspended in the

air for hours by their hands, or with arms tied behind their backs (which dislocated their shoulders), or upside down; being subjected to slow rhythmic clapping on their ears which eventually caused permanent hearing loss; being burned with cigarettes and butane lighters all over the body; being run over by a vehicle; and being subjected to electric shocks on all parts of the body, especially on the tongue, ears, and on the sensitive sexual organs.¹⁰

The site does memorialize those who are known to have been killed or to have disappeared after having been brought to Villa Grimaldi with a wall sculpture at the far end of Peace Park inscribed with their names (it does not contain the names of all those who are known to have passed through it). With maybe a few exceptions, none of the names are well-known. Indeed the regime sought to terrorize ordinary citizens—students, workers, community members—as a means of enforcing total and complete conformity. A perusal of the names reveals at least two sets of brothers, and that about a third of Villa Grimaldi’s detainees were women. Matta explained that family members of at least five of the women report that the women were pregnant at the time the DINA apprehended them. If the women gave birth, their children have not been recovered and are believed to have been given to the friends and families of the military.

A swimming pool surrounded by a high chain-link fence is another part of the exhibit. The incongruity of a swimming pool bearing the label “torture device” is one of the starkest exhibits on the grounds. The DINA guards had parties by the pool in the summer time, bringing the female prisoners from their cells and forcing them to dance, sit with, and otherwise “entertain” the guards. In addition, the pool parties were a time when camp collaborators, those who were complying with the guards’ demands or offering up information, were allowed to sit by the edge of the pool and drink Coca-Cola and eat Tritons (a well-known Chilean brand of chocolate-covered cookies). The pool was also a torture device. Prisoners were dragged by ropes back and forth under the water; at least one is known to have died of hypothermia when this torture was conducted during the winter.



The marker identifying the swimming pool literally states: “Swimming Pool: A Frightening Place.” This refers to the way the DINA used the pool as a tool for rewarding collaborators and threatening others. In the winter of 1975, a male prisoner was tortured in the pool and recorded as dying of hypothermia.

Considering its horrific past, today the well-tended park is itself a contradiction. It is open Tuesday through Sunday 11 A.M. to 6:30 P.M., and often local schoolchildren and teenagers come to the park in the early evening to talk and hang out. While the locale is apparently treated with respect—there are no signs of vandalism or graffiti—it is unclear how much the park's young visitors understand the history commemorated there. In the absence of history lessons in schools and a general effort to make Villa Grimaldi and similar sites understandable to the public, it reminded me of the Indian burial mounds kids played on when I was a youngster in the rural Midwest. They were a curious novelty from another era, and since we never read about Native Americans in any depth in our school books, we presumed they were of no importance.

The memory site that is probably the best known to most Chileans and international tourists is the Memorial for the Disappeared, a high, long marble wall that stands at the entrance to the Santiago General Cemetery, the city's most important graveyard. It bears the names of the more than three thousand people disappeared or murdered in Chile after the military coup. But rather than simply listing names like the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., the Memorial for the Disappeared contains crypts in the wall. When new bodies are uncovered, or identified as a part of ongoing forensic work in the unmarked graves that are constantly being uncov-



Burial vaults, many unmarked, extending along the edges of the wall of the Memorial for the Disappeared. Santiago General Cemetery, 1999.

ered throughout Chile, those remains are brought to the wall crypts and the name moves from “disappeared” to “deceased.” Inscribed at the top of the wall is a line from Raul Zurita, one of Chile’s most important contemporary poets: “*Todo mi amor está aquí y se ha quedado: Pegado a las rocas, al mar, a las montañas.*” (“All my love is here and here has stayed: Tied to the rocks, to the sea, to the mountains.”) The base of the wall is piled high with bouquets of flowers, photographs of disappeared family members with entreaties for their recovery, and posters calling for the government to do more to account for the disappeared. There are always people there.

In another section of the cemetery is “Patio 29,” the municipal potter’s field where the mutilated, tortured, and executed bodies were dumped by the military government, buried in graves marked “NN” (*no nombre*, no name). As opposed to the Memorial for the Disappeared, there is no way a tourist or visitor to the cemetery would know of this plot. It has no marker or commemorative explanation. After the September 1973 coup, the plot was used to bury many bodies found on the streets of Santiago, including those who were killed by multiple gunshots and snipers, those who were executed by machine-gun fire, and those who died while in police confinement. The police and military made no effort to identify those bodies, simply dumping them in graves marked with crude metal crosses with “NN” painted on them. Hundreds of victims, many of whom are still listed as disappeared, were



“Patio 29” containing the unmarked graves (“NN” for *no nombre*). Santiago General Cemetery, 1999.

buried there in rough coffins, sometimes two bodies to a grave. In 1982, in an attempt to cover up some of their most egregious excesses, the military government disinterred hundreds of bodies and disposed of them in unknown locales, and reportedly ground up the bones into chicken feed. Ten years later, after the return of the civilian government, hundreds of remains were found in this plot and, with the help of international forensic specialists, were identified and returned to their families. The bodies usually were then moved to the crypts in the memorial wall at the other end of the cemetery.¹¹

Across the lane from Patio 29 is the crypt of Victor Jara, one of Latin America's most famous folk singers and guitarists. Jara, one of the most well-known of the victims of the military coup, was arrested at the Universidad Técnica del Estado on 11 September 1973. He was taken to Estadio Chile, the national soccer stadium, in Santiago along with hundreds of prisoners who were detained in the early hours and days of the coup. There he was tortured, had his hands chopped off as a message to all those folk singers and cultural workers who had supported Salvador Allende, and finally killed on September 14. His body was found lying on a Santiago street by passersby and taken to his wife, who had begun making inquiries as to his whereabouts. His crypt, alongside others unrelated to Chilean political causes, is covered with flowers and with signs that visitors have tacked onto the wall calling for justice and an accounting of the disappeared; graffiti on the trees nearby proclaims Victor Jara's continued importance as a symbol of cultural resistance.

In another, older section of the Santiago cemetery, among the elaborate mausoleums of the elite founding families of Chile, stands the grave of Salvador Allende and his family. President Allende committed suicide at La Moneda, the government palace, during the coup rather than allow himself to be taken by the military. His body was taken by military personnel at that time and left in an unmarked grave in Vina del Mar, 140 kilometers from Santiago. In the 1990s, Allende's remains were moved to this spot in the main cemetery, where a monument tops an underground cavity containing the bodies of Allende and his daughter, who likewise committed suicide while exiled in Cuba.¹²

Without Pedro Matta's explanations, the visit to Villa Grimaldi and the other memory sites would have been far more superficial, even for someone with a fairly good knowledge of recent Chilean history. As a Latin American historian, teacher, and political activist, I for years have read about, taught, and protested against the antidemocratic Pinochet government. Although not an expert in Chilean history, I considered myself well informed. Pedro Matta's tour of the memory sites, however, provided me with a far greater depth of understanding of the oppression meted out by the military regime. Few of the survivors of torture have Pedro Matta's stamina



**Mausoleum containing the body of Salvador Allende and other family members.
Santiago General Cemetery, 1999.**

and ability to explain what happened to them, an experience he describes as “the depths of the abyss of the human condition.”¹³ He attributes his resilience to the fact that Villa Grimaldi was actually the second locale at which he was detained. As Matta explains, although he spent several weeks in Villa Grimaldi, he came there after having been held for five days at an even more notorious place, Venda Sexy, so named for the inhumanly bizarre sex games a guard orchestrated there with her dogs and the prisoners.¹⁴ According to Matta, because Venda Sexy had brought him to the brink of death and certain despair, he found Villa Grimaldi more tolerable. In addition, Matta is unique in his dedication to uncovering and preserving the historical record of abuse during the military regime.

The scarcity of resources devoted to establishing a public record of what happened in the torture centers, and to finding and accounting for those who disappeared, serves the purposes of those in Chile who would just as soon the profundity of the antihuman behavior of the Pinochet era remained an abstraction. For the right-wing Alianza Popular, relegating the ugly picture of torture and brutality to an obscure past allows them to ignore any responsibility for the death, disappearance, and torture they supported. On the other hand, from the vantage point of the mod-

erate/left Concertación, acknowledging the abuses, while refusing to press for reparations or to hold the military responsible for human rights violations, allows them to govern without confrontation.

The January 2000 presidential victory of Ricardo Lagos may have opened a new window to this horrific past. A member of the Socialist Party who ran as the candidate of the Concertación and won in a close runoff against the rightist Joaquín Lavín, Lagos has renewed hope that human rights violators will be prosecuted. Toward that end, Pedro Matta and his allies continue their work on several fronts, both within Chile and internationally. They compile testimony and documentation from expolitical prisoners, the families of the disappeared, and from guards to substantiate the charges against those who carried out the torture as a part of the process of bringing the military officers to trial in Chile and locating the thousands of bodies of the disappeared. In addition, they send their information to human rights groups abroad in case Chile's military torturers can be brought to justice before international tribunals. Ironically, the task of bringing some of the twentieth century's most blatant violators of the law to justice has been, and probably will continue to be, entangled in a web of arcane legal proceedings.

The Chilean National Organization of Ex-Political Prisoners has been making many gains in the months since Lagos's January victory. Pedro Matta was able to travel to the United States in April 2000 to meet with ex-political prisoners in New York and Washington, D.C., in an effort to coordinate the human rights work outside the country with the campaign to bring the torturers to justice in Chile. In addition, Matta met with Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) to invite him back to Villa Grimaldi for a ceremony and commemoration of the site on 10 December 2000, the International Day of Human Rights. Harkin, who had tried to enter Villa Grimaldi in 1976 (and actually managed to get through the gates before being turned back by DINA guards) was instrumental in opening the issue of torture in Chile to international oversight. Through the commemoration in December, as well as through the collection of personal testimony from former torture victims, and especially in the preservation of the *sitios de memoria*, human rights activists in Chile seek to publicize the devastating record of torture in their society. They are public-history sites that stand alongside other monuments worldwide, such as Robbin Island in South Africa, the tiger cages of Vietnam, and Nazi concentration camps, as markers in the international campaign to stop torture.

At this writing, in late summer 2000, the Chilean Supreme Court has voted 14 to 6 to strip General Augusto Pinochet of his senatorial immunity. The Court's 8 August 2000 ruling allows Judge Juan Guzmán, who is serving as the prosecutor, to move ahead with the 157 criminal cases filed against Pinochet by human rights groups, families of the disappeared, and torture victims.

Although President Ricardo Lagos voiced his approval of the ruling, the Socialist government's strategy has been to leave the case against Pinochet and his military commanders in the hands of the judiciary. Hopefully this will finally result in convictions. On the other hand, the question of reparations and compensation to the victims and their families has not been raised by the government, and may stand outside the court's jurisdiction.

Notes

This article is part of a continuing series on the public presentation of the nation, reflecting the political transformations that have challenged or refuted the legitimacy and national stories told by past regimes. For the first installment of this series, see *Radical History Review* 75.

1. "No Frogs Allowed: In Santiago, a Professor's Sometimes Puzzling Encounters with the Spanish Language," *New York Times* (January 30, 2000), 12.
2. "Grand Resort's Faded Glory," *New York Times* (January 30, 2000), 10.
3. For more information on the military dictatorship, see Marjorie Agosin, *Scraps of Life: Chilean Arpilleras: Chilean Women and the Pinochet Dictatorship*, trans. Cola Franzen (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1987); Pamela Constable with Arturo Valenzuela, *A Nation of Enemies: Chile under Pinochet* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993); Paul W. Drake and Ivan Jaksic, eds., *The Struggle for Democracy in Chile, 1982–1990* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); Mark Ensalaco, *Chile under Pinochet: Recovering the Truth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Judy Maloof, ed. and trans., *Voices of Resistance: Testimonies of Cuban and Chilean Women* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999); Lois Hecht Oppenheim, *Politics in Chile: Democracy, Authoritarianism, and the Search for Development* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Mary Helen Spooner, *Soldiers in a Narrow Land: The Pinochet Regime in Chile* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Arturo Valenzuela, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Chile* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). In my view, the best single study of what the Unidad Popular attempted to accomplish and the obstacles it faced remains Peter Winn's *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
4. "Pinochet Case Reviving Voices of the Tortured," *New York Times* (January 3, 2000), 1. The National Security Archives has accumulated the most comprehensive documentation of the atrocities committed by the Pinochet government and of the U.S. complicity and support for the dictatorship. For a listing of their numerous publications and to view the documents online, go to their Web site: www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/.
5. For information on Argentina's Dirty War, see Amnesty International, *The "Disappeared" of Argentina: List of Cases Reported to Amnesty International, March 1976–February 1979* (London: Amnesty International, 1979); Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, trans. Toby Talbot (New York: Random House, 1981); Marguerite Guzman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1994); Rita Arditti, *Searching for Life: The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Disappeared Children of Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

6. A number of other memory sites that I was not able to visit, and thus have not reviewed here, are Venda Sexy, the furnaces at Lonquén and the Salvador Allende Museum of Solidarity. For more information on these and other detention centers see www.derechoschile.com/english on the Web and “A Long-Deferred Museum in Honor of Allende,” *New York Times* (January 6, 2000), 1.

In Lonquén limestone furnaces built at the turn of the century were used to bury the bodies of all the male members of two peasant families living in the area. In 1978 the remains of fifteen bodies were found at the bottom of these furnaces. The discovery and subsequent investigation marked a turning point in the popular understanding of the atrocities of the military government. The owner of the furnaces, a right-wing militant, dynamited the furnaces in 1987 in hopes of destroying a site that was associated with the gross human rights violations of the military era. Isabel Allende's novel, *Of Love and Shadows*, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987) is a powerful story based on the discovery of the mass graves at Lonquén.

7. According to United Nations estimates, about one million Chileans left their country between 1973 and the mid-1980s for political and economic reasons, including several thousand who walked to Argentina in the weeks and months following the coup. In a country of about 12 million inhabitants (14 million today), that means about 10 percent left. Of those who were in exile, 30–40 percent are believed to have returned to Chile. Some have returned for a short while, but because they could not find work or could not adjust to Chile, they did not stay. Most of the exiles are in Europe (France, Sweden, England), the United States, or Canada (Montreal). See Javier Martínez and Alvaro Díaz, *Chile: The Great Transformation* (Washington, D.C., and Geneva: Brookings Institution and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1996).
8. Pedro Alejandro Matta, interview by author, Santiago, Chile, November 16, 1999.
9. Peter Kornbluh, “Chile Declassified,” *Nation* (August 9–16, 1999), 21–23. Also see his forthcoming book, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York: New Press). A number of good books in Spanish that describe the political assassinations in the days after the coup and subsequent repression are Patricia Verdugo, *El caso arellano: Los zarpazos del puma* (Santiago: CESOC, 1997) and *Interferencia secreta* (Santiago: Sudamericana, 1998). Alejandra Matus's book *El libro negro de la justicia chilena* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1999) has been banned in Chile because it accuses a Supreme Court member by name.
10. See also Hugh O'Shaughnessy, *Pinochet: The Politics of Torture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).
11. Matta interview.
12. More than fifty people were with Salvador Allende in the Moneda at the time of the coup. After they surrendered, they were taken to a military garrison, Regimiento Tacna, where they were tortured and from where they “disappeared.” In 1994, the remains of Dr. Enrique Paris, a member of this group, were found in what had been a military base. The forensic examination showed that his legs had been burned with an acetylene torch while he was still alive.
13. Matta interview.

14. Venda Sexy functioned as an “official” detention center with a regular “9-to-5” workday schedule, and then the extracurricular torture began at night. One of the guards was a female *carabinero* (policeman) named Ingrid Olderock who was a dog trainer for the police. She used her particular talents to train a German shepherd dog to rape women. The police called the dog “Bellodilla,” which was the name of the head of the Chilean Communist Party. Olderock is alive and lives in Nunoa (a section of Santiago), where she is retired on a comfortable pension. For more on Venda Sexy see www.derechoschile.com/english.