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*Chile, Obstinate Memory.* First Run/Icarus Films.

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The results of a recent survey of young Chileans shocked me. Thirty-five percent of the youth questioned had no idea what had happened on September 11, 1973, the day the Chilean military overthrew the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. Equally, 35 percent did not know anything about Augusto Pinochet or his regime. Forty-two percent had never heard of Salvador Allende (<cite>La Tercera</cite>, 23 July 1998). Although these figures reveal a variety of things, they indicate two facts that are relevant to this review of Patricio Guzman's latest film, <cite>Chile, Obstinate Memory</cite>. First, they demonstrate the extent to which the seventeen-year dictatorship of August Pinochet negatively influenced people's awareness of their own history. Second, more subtly, they reveal the extensive process of depoliticalization that the military government achieved or attempted to achieve during its rule. <p><cite>Chile, Obstinate Memory</cite>, Chilean director Patricio Guzman's latest film, is a study of memory. What do those who lived through the Allende years remember about that period in Chilean history? How do young people born during the dictatorship imagine those critical three years? The film does not, indeed can not, offer simple answers to these questions. However, it does present the viewer with a range of possibilities that reflect the deep political divisions that lie beneath the surface of a seemingly less politicized people. <p>Very few people in Chile have seen the film <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite>, director Patricio Guzman's magnum opus about the working class in Chile during the Popular Unity (UP) government (1970-1973). Once the military seized power in September 1973, it arrested four of the filmmakers who had worked on <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite>, disappeared the cameraman Jorge Muller in 1974, and prohibited the film from being shown. (The military also occupied Chile Films, the national film production and distribution cen-

ter, and destroyed its equipment, stock, and films, including rare archival footage from the early twentieth century.) As Patricio Guzman recounts in <cite>Chile, Obstinate Memory</cite>, he managed to smuggle the uncut footage that would later become <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite> out of the country with the help of his uncle. The film was subsequently edited and assembled in Cuba and shown around the world. Realizing that few people in Chile had seen the movie, Guzman returned to his homeland in 1996 to show it and to record people's reactions to it. <cite>Chile, Obstinate Memory</cite>, then, is the story of his audience's response to seeing <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite> for the first time. The film, therefore, is part of and contributes to the ongoing debate about both the Popular Unity government and the Pinochet dictatorship. <p>Guzman opens the film with shots of the Chilean air force bombing La Moneda on September 11, 1973. He then rapidly jumps to Juan, a former member of Allende's personal security team. On September 11, 1973, Juan had planned to get married. Instead, he found himself in La Moneda, the presidential palace, defending Allende, the Popular Unity government, and Chilean democracy against military assault. Unlike most of his companeros, whom the military murdered, Juan survived the fighting and is alive to tell his story. He goes back into La Moneda, posing as part of the film crew, for the first time in twenty-three years. As he walks through the presidential palace, he recounts the events from the fighting that took place there the day of the coup. <p>In one very effective scene, a group of people who participated in the defense of La Moneda gathers to watch <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite>. Guzman shows them the bombing of La Moneda and pictures of the individuals who took part in its defense. One by one, they identify themselves in the pictures and the faces of their murdered comrades. Both of these scenes evoke simultaneously a

sense of what it was like to be in La Moneda on September 11, 1973, what it is like to revive memories of that day, and what the intervening years have meant to this group of dedicated supporters of the Popular Unity. The primary sense one gets from these people is that they are proud they fought to defend Allende and that they continue to suffer a sense of tremendous loss for the UP's defeat. In a particularly moving scene, this group of Allende supporters looks at the pictures of the men who did not survive and, as they recognize them, repeat "Disappeared, Disappeared, Disappeared [...]"

One of my favorite scenes shows a group of young men in a brass band boldly marching through the main street of downtown Santiago playing *Venceremos*, the signature song of the Popular Unity government. Several people clap, one flashes them the V sign, others look surprised, many remain impassive, some do not even look up from their newspapers. I would have liked the scene even better if Guzman had interviewed the pedestrians so we could know what they thought about the public playing of the UP's theme song after it had been silenced for twenty-three years.

Many of the people to whom Guzman showed the film were born after the military coup or were children when it happened. Their reactions vary. One student criticizes the film for being one-sided since it focuses only on the workers. "What about the owners of the factories?" he asks. Another disagrees with the film's contention that the CIA was involved in the coup. Like many rightists in Chile, he believes that the U.S. unjustly criticized the military of abusing human rights. Why did the U.S. desert the Pinochet government when it led the first successful rollback of a "communist" government? The young man concludes that it is obvious that the CIA was not involved in the overthrow of the UP government because "the coup was a perfect military success. The Chilean army was much more efficient in the fight against Marxism Leninism than the U.S. army." He justifies the coup and the human rights abuses that followed by pointing out that "only 2,132 people died. The coup was efficient and surgical. It saved the country from a civil war." His words reflect the position adopted by many on the right when confronted with the findings of the Rettig Report (the truth commission established by the Aylwin government to determine the numbers and types of human rights abuses committed by the Pinochet dictatorship): those who died were not victims but armed combatants in a civil war. The military fought and killed them as part of its duty to protect the nation. Thus, there were no human rights abuses. The rest is all communist propaganda.

On the other side of the political spectrum, another group of young

people is so moved by the film that tears prevent several of them from talking. They are the children of the disappeared and those whom the military killed, tortured, or imprisoned. For them, the film is a public vindication of what their families stood for and for which they paid way too high a price. They witness, for the first time, what their parents believed in and were willing to give their lives for: the creation of a more just society. One young woman emotionally states that after seeing the film "I feel proud of my people [...] of all those people who fought for an ideal [...] It is legitimate to fight for a dream."

In another scene, a debate develops among a group of high school girls who watch the film. While most of them apparently agree that Pinochet's "economic miracle" was, indeed, just that, they disagree as to whether or not people's human rights needed to be violated to accomplish it. I found this scene disturbing because it indicates how deeply neoliberalistic "morality" has penetrated the younger generation. Many of the girls seem to think that a few human rights abuses here and there were not too great a price to pay for the economic success story that they consider Chile to be. Few, if any, of the girls challenge the idea that the military's economic program was a success. They either do not know (which is not surprising considering the enormous control the dictatorship exercised over the media) or disregard the fact that one third of Chileans lived below the poverty line in 1990 when the military left power.

Unfortunately, no one else in the film offers a critique of Pinochet's economic policies or much of a defense of the UP's either. Instead, many of those who had been activists during the Popular Unity government present themselves and those whom the military killed as noble idealists who pursued an impossible dream. The strongest defense of the UP's program comes from Ernesto Mal Bran, a professor. He says that "The Popular Unity was a ship of dreamers propelled by a collective dream which was shredded to pieces [...] a dream of justice, education, health and housing for all [...]. It was a noble dream. You cannot progress without dreams." But the Popular Unity was more than a dream. It was a concrete attempt to create a new economic system in Chile that would benefit the majority of the population and to democratize the political system. In *Chile, Obstinate Memory*, no one mentions the UP's economic programs, workers taking over factories, peasants occupying land, the attempts to build *poder popular* (people's power) or the demands to redistribute the wealth and construct a socialist society that were the themes of *The Battle of Chile* and, I believe, the fundamental reason why the military and the U.S. gov-

ernment overthrew the Allende government. In this film, the <cite>Moonlight Sonata</cite> has replaced <cite>Venceremos</cite> as the recurring theme song of the movie. This suggests that dreams and longings have replaced commitment and struggle, or at least that Guzman believes they have. <p> One thing that has not changed between <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite> and <cite>Chile, Obstinate Memory</cite> is the preponderance of male voices. Although we do hear the thoughts of some women, men sustain the film's narrative. There is one change, though. In <cite>Chile, Obstinate Memory</cite> many of the people who speak are middle-class intellectuals, not the workers who dominated <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite>. <p> This film is much more ambiguous than <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite> was. For those who found <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite> too heavy handed, this film will be much more to your liking. Guzman does not take such a clear position on political issues as he did in <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite>. In a sense, however, both films are accurate representations of the time periods in which they were made. In the 1970s, the left believed in itself and its capacity to build a more just world. Today, that

confidence is gone, weakened, in the case of Chile, by the defeat of the Popular Unity, the repression unleashed by the dictatorship, and the substantial reversal of fortunes suffered internationally. <p> Yet, I would have appreciated more clarity. One thing that is not so clear, unfortunately, is what it is that people remember so obstinately. And which people? Some people seem reluctant to remember the past, to stir up memories that seem laden with pain. Their memories of the Popular Unity seem focused on their own and their comrade's personal involvement, not on the larger political issues they must once have eagerly discussed. Many of the young people who were children at the time of the 1973 coup or were born after it took place have memories of the Popular Unity that were created for them by the military. They remember it primarily as a time of disorder and chaos and use this image to support its overthrow by the military. Conversely, the young people whose families have been the victims of the military's repression see <cite>The Battle of Chile</cite> as an affirmation of their families' past. For them, memory seems to bring about a liberatory catharsis. <p>

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