



THE BATTLE OF CHILE

(1975-1978)

CHILE, OBSTINATE MEMORY

(1997)

THE PINOCHET CASE

(2001)

Films by Patricio Guzmán

“Patricio Guzmán’s heartbreaking probe of Chile’s revolution, the Pinochet coup, and the long entangled aftermath will be considered in centuries to come one of the most eloquent and daring explorations of revolution and repression, hope and memory, to survive our sorry times.

What Guzmán passionately and clinically observes in Chile is valid for the whole world.”

–Ariel Dorfman

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THE BATTLE OF CHILE (1975-1978)

Synopsis

On September 11, 1973, President Salvador Allende's democratically elected Chilean government was overthrown in a bloody coup by General Augusto Pinochet's army.



Patricio Guzmán and five colleagues had been filming the political developments in Chile throughout the nine months leading up to that day. The bombing of the Presidential Palace, in which Allende died, would now become the ending for Guzmán's seminal documentary THE BATTLE OF CHILE (1975-76), an epic chronicle of that country's open and peaceful socialist revolution, and of the violent counter-revolution against it.



The film is presented in three parts:

Part I. *The Insurrection of the Bourgeoisie* (96 minutes) examines the escalation of rightist opposition following the left's unexpected victory in Congressional elections held in March, 1973.

Part II. *The Coup d'Etat* (88 minutes) opens with the attempted military coup of June, 1973 which is put down by troops loyal to the government. It serves as a useful dry run, however, for the final showdown, that everyone now realizes is coming.

Part III. *The Power Of The People* (78 minutes) deals with the creation by ordinary workers and peasants of thousands of local groups of "popular power" to distribute food, occupy, guard and run factories and farms, oppose black market profiteering, and link together neighborhood social service organizations.

Review Excerpts

"Not only the best film about Allende and the coup d'etat, but among the best documentary films ever made, changing our concepts of political documentary within a framework accessible to the widest audience."

—Time Out Film Guide

"Great films rarely arrive as unheralded as The Battle of Chile."

– Pauline Kael, *The New Yorker*

CHILE, OBSTINATE MEMORY (1997)

Synopsis



Juan (on right), ex-bodyguard of President Salvador Allende, as seen in *Chile, Obstinate Memory*, a film by Patricio Guzmán.
A First Run/Carus Films Release.

Hearing only the official version, a generation of young Chileans has grown up with little knowledge of the historical facts surrounding the events of September 11, 1973. On that day Salvador Allende's democratically elected government was overthrown in a bloody coup by General Augusto Pinochet's army.

Now, Patricio Guzmán returns to show his seminal film about the events of 1973, *THE BATTLE OF CHILE*, in his homeland for the first time, and to

explore the terrain of the confiscated (but maybe reawakening) memories of the Chilean people.

Survivors reminisce as they watch that film, recognizing lost comrades and recalling their courage, gaiety and love of life. Those who were not killed during the coup itself were crowded into the National Stadium in Santiago, where many were tortured, disappeared, and never seen again. Survivors talk about the terror that characterized the Pinochet regime until the dictator was finally obliged to relinquish power.

On the streets of Santiago a group of young people are seen marching and singing the Unidad Popular anthem from the time of Allende. Looks of uneasy surprise can be seen on the faces of passers-by. They have not heard this song in almost a quarter century. A quarter century of censorship and self-censorship, buried memories and controlled grief.

Review Excerpts

“The disquieting juxtaposition of a past so indelibly etched in the minds of one generation and a youthful population oblivious to history lends the film a haunting quality. Pic’s subtlety should earn it major accolades.”

—Variety

“Through a careful selection of images and convincing montage, [Guzmán] makes it possible to grasp the themes of memory and forgetting through non-verbal means.”

—DOX

THE PINOCHET CASE (2001)

Synopsis

Augusto Pinochet, the general who overthrew President Salvador Allende of Chile in 1973, was the first dictator in Latin America—or the world—to be humbled by the international justice system since the Nuremberg trials.



In September 1998, Pinochet flew to London on a pleasure trip. He rested for a few days. He had tea with Margaret Thatcher. But, suddenly, he began experiencing back pain and underwent an operation in the London Clinic. Upon waking from surgery, he was arrested by the London police.

Guzmán follows this continuing story, investigating the legal origins of the legal case in Spain—where it began two years before Pinochet's arrest. With the film's protagonists, among them the prosecutor Carlos Castresana who filed the charges, and Judge Baltasar Garzón, who upheld them and issued the arrest warrant, *THE PINOCHET CASE* explores how a small group of people in Madrid laid the groundwork for this incredible feat—catching a dictator 25 years after his rise to power.

Review Excerpts

“Eloquent, meticulously structured. A gripping step-by-step account of the case. Sober political and legal analysis alternates with grim first-hand accounts of torture and murder in a film that has the structure of a choral symphony that swells to a bittersweet finale. A beautifully layered mosaic that is all the more powerful for never raising its voice to a shout.”

—The New York Times

“Haunting! A magisterial documentary about the force of memory.”

—New York Magazine

“Extraordinarily powerful!”

—Pat Aufderheide, International Documentary

*“Both a legalistic thriller and a searing documentary, *THE PINOCHET CASE* is a fitting coda to a magnificent trilogy... (and) Guzmán's trilogy is one of the finest documentaries ever made.”*

—The Guardian

Director's Statement



The news of Pinochet's arrest reached my ears while in Madrid, breaking down and packing up my house, getting ready to move back to Paris for the second time. I stood surrounded by suitcases and trunks as I listened to the news.

I was stunned. How could I possibly be seeing the ex-dictator's face on a television screen, "arrested in London," 12,000 kilometers from Chile, for crimes against humanity?

Surrounded by my boxes, I began making phone calls. No one knew anything. I had no idea what to do for quite a while... Every object in my house (above all, the reels containing my films) reminded me of a past I had been carrying from one country to another during 27 years of exile... Just how deeply had Pinochet become part of my own life? How many years had I spent standing up to him?

Twenty-eight years ago I was lucky enough to film "La Batalla de Chile" ("The Battle of Chile"), a documentary film that chronicled Allende's socialist revolution and Pinochet's terrible coup. Later, I lived in five different countries—a wandering filmmaker—but was able to return to Santiago to film those that stood up against the dictatorship.

Now, finally, my story had an end.



And after three years of work, what is it that has touched me most about this process? First of all, I witnessed a dictator unable to show his face, corralled by the justice system and growing smaller by the day. I also saw and filmed my countrymen divided into two completely irreconcilable groups. I spent a lot of time filming the victims, most of them women, plainly confiding in the future. It was something I would never forget, and the thing that touched me most.



It's also a film about "unbelief," about an event that seemed "unreal" to us, an "accident" that made it possible for justice to annul the impunity of one of the world's most famous tyrants.



The film shows how this "impossible event" became possible. And, above all, the way in which a legal maneuver, so incredible that absolutely no one believed it would work, was conceived.



—Patricio Guzmán



Combined Awards & Festivals



 Battle of Chile
Premiere, Director's Fortnight
1975 & 1976 Cannes Film
Festival 



 Battle of Chile
Grand Prize, 1975 & 1976
Grenoble International
Film Festival 



 Chile, Obstinate Memory
Public Choice Award, 1997
Vue sur les Docs 

 Chile, Obstinate Memory
Second Coral Prize , 1997
International Festival of New
Latin American Cinema 

 Chile, Obstinate Memory
Grand Prize, 1997
Florence Film Festival 

 The Pinochet Case
Premiere, Semaine de la Critique,
2001 Cannes Film Festival 

 The Pinochet Case
Grand Prize,
2001 Fiction du Reel 

 The Pinochet Case,
Golden Gate Award for Best
Documentary, 2002 San Francisco
International Film Festival 

1979 Berlin Film Festival
1979 London Film Festival
1997 Toronto International Film Festival
1998 Sundance Film Festival
1998 New Latin American Film Festival, UCLA
2002 Amnesty International Film Festival
2002 Seattle International Film Festival

October 3, 2002

ARTS ABROAD; Telling Chile's Story, Even if Chile Has Little Interest

By ALAN RIDING

Five days after the Chilean army overthrew the elected Socialist government of President Salvador Allende Gossens on Sept. 11, 1973, Patricio Guzmán was arrested by military intelligence officers. He was then interrogated in the national stadium in Santiago for two weeks before he was released and fled the country. He was lucky. While many Allende supporters were being jailed, tortured and killed, he escaped because he was "only" a documentary filmmaker.

Yet in the nearly three decades since the coup, Mr. Guzmán, a gentle-mannered man of 61, has earned a significant place in the history of Chile's failed experiment in nonviolent revolution. Through a series of documentary films, notably his monumental 270-minute "Battle of Chile," he has become a chronicler of Allende's three years in office and a collector of the bitter memories of the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, which lasted until 1990.

His latest film, "The Pinochet Case," which is showing at the Film Forum in New York, recounts the story of General Pinochet's unexpected arrest in London on Oct. 16, 1998, at the request of the Spanish authorities, who had charged him with genocide, terrorism and murder. It then records the 16-month legal fight until a British court approved his extradition to Spain and the British government ordered his release on grounds of ill health.

Accompanying this reporting, however, Mr. Guzmán uses the testimony of nine women -- some torture victims, others relatives of murdered or missing people -- to tell of the dictatorship. "Instead of using a voice-over to provide the background, they do that," Mr. Guzmán explained in an interview in his Paris apartment. "They provide the counterpoint to the story. From journalism to memory to journalism."

The stories they tell are heart-rending. Among them were Victoria, whose son disappeared; Nelly, whose husband disappeared; Luisa, whose two sons were murdered in 1985; Cecilia, who was detained from 1981 to 1992; Ofelia, who survived torture in a house of horrors known as the Villa Grimaldi. The counterpoint of their memories are recent images of the disinterment of some of the thousands who died during the dictatorship.

At the end of the film, General Pinochet is back in Chile and, newly vulnerable after the humiliation of his experience in London, his immunity from prosecution as a senator for life is lifted and he is charged with torture and other crimes. Deemed by government doctors to be unfit to face trial, he remains under house arrest. And as if completing the circle, the movie's final image is a statue of Allende being erected in front of Moneda Palace, where he died.

But for Mr. Guzmán the story is not over and perhaps never will be. It is a story fed by memories that he feels committed to keep telling even though Chile is now governed by its third elected civilian government since General Pinochet stepped down and many Chileans prefer not to look back.

"What shocks me is the lack of space for memory in Latin America," he said. "There is no great literature on repression. In Chile great writers have not spoken out with the exception of Ariel Dorfman. Movie directors turn away from the topic. Most artists feel it is a tired theme. They want to move on, to write about or cover other things. I think we'll have to wait for those who are 15 now to address this past."

Yet for the next generation, Mr. Guzmán's movies will stand as a record. Indeed, when he returned to Chile in March 1971 after six years of studying cinema in Spain, his immediate thought was to record what he saw. "I sensed a different climate the moment I arrived," he recalled. "The look on people's faces, the music, the middle classes, peasants and workers in the streets, something I had never seen before in my life, a sense of fiesta so unlike Chile."

The result was a 100-minute documentary called "The First Year." But as economic conditions deteriorated in Chile, Mr. Guzmán was paralyzed until he received the gift of 30 hours' worth of film stock from the French documentary maker Chris Marker. With that he resumed work with his cameraman, Jorge Muller, later murdered by the dictatorship, this time going into factories and union meetings to record what he calls "the invisible reality."

They were still at work on the morning of the coup, but Mr. Guzmán had the foresight to hide everything he had filmed. And thanks to the Swedish Embassy in Santiago, he recovered his historical record four months later in Stockholm. He spent the next five years in Cuba turning it into "The Battle for Chile." "For me, the real coup was in 1979 when I finished the film," he recalled. "I suddenly had no mission and fell into a terrible crisis."

He was rescued by the search for memory, first when he made "Pre-Columbian Mexico," a television series around a Mexican village, and then in 1986 when he visited Chile for the first time since the coup to make "In the Name of God," about liberation theology under the Pinochet regime. Six years later, he returned to the subject of liberation theology, this time across Latin America, in "The Southern Cross."

"The Mexican film made me understand how a documentary can play a role in the preservation of memory," he said. "A country without documentary films is like a family without a photo album. When you see the photo, you remember your past, but the same photo also redefines your past. So there is a to and fro with memory. You return to a forgotten story, and in the process you rewrite that story."

With that in mind, then, for a film called "Chile, Obstinate Memory," Mr. Guzmán returned to Chile in 1996 to trace those whom he could identify from "The Battle for Chile." "The Pinochet Case" produced a similarly powerful record. While only 9 of his 40 witnesses appear in the film, a French cable channel, Histoire, plans to broadcast the testimony of all 40 in 10 one-hour programs. Their accounts will also be published in a book.

Mr. Guzmán's next project, a biography of Allende for the 30th anniversary of his death, next year, also dwells on memory. He said: "I want the memories not of political leaders, but of old people

who have different memories, of people whom no one knows exist, people who retain the collective popular memory. What did Allende mean to them?"

His frustration is that Chile seems less interested in his work than the rest of the world is. His movies have never been shown on Chilean television and stay only three or four weeks in theaters. " 'Obstinate Memory' ran for four weeks in Santiago and for four months in Buenos Aires," he said. "In Santiago 'The Pinochet Case' was taken off after three weeks to make room for 'Harry Potter.' "

But his own energy seems unaffected. "I do what I do because the subjects fascinate me," he said. "I may be in a furrow, but it's not claustrophobic. Memory is a concept, but it is also an animal that enters your body. Remembering can be very powerful. It's an animal that you also have to dominate."

The New Battle of Chile: Keeping Memory Alive

By CLAUDIA DREIFUS

WHEN American film audiences last heard from the Chilean director Patricio Guzmán, the year was 1978 and "The Battle of Chile,"

his 190-minute documentary about the destruction of the elected government of the Socialist leader Salvador Allende Gossens, was appearing in theaters for the first time.

Mr. Guzmán's film had originally been created in two parts, and each had been shown at festivals around the world in the three years before. Seen in its entirety, though, its impact was similar to that of "The Sorrow and the Pity," Marcel Ophüls's monumental documentary on the French during World War II.

What Mr. Guzmán and a team of four had done was to wade into Santiago's turbulent streets and film everything they witnessed in the 10 months preceding the coup, led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet, on Sept. 11, 1973, and on that day itself. Despite some heavy-handed Marxist narrative — Mr. Guzmán and his colleagues were fervent Allende supporters — the result was gripping. As a couple of film critics noted, if Tolstoy had made movies, his work might well have looked like this.

"We actually see a country cracking open," Pauline Kael wrote in *The New Yorker*. "The inner workings are so public that they now can be photographed."

Viewing "The Battle of Chile" in 1978, one was struck by the sheer bravery of the director and his team, and by the fact that they had, for the most part, accomplished something very difficult: showing the minute-to-minute of history. Today, Mr. Guzmán, 57, displays his own sense of wonder as he recalls the making of the film.

"We wanted to film all the little events that went on inside the movements," he explained recently by telephone from his home in Madrid, in a mixture of Spanish, English and German (his German-born companion, Renate Sachse, served as a makeshift translator). "During the Allende period, the streets were the most interesting place to be. You could have made 10 movies from all the dramas we found."

By the time of the coup, 42,000 feet of film had been shot. The raw footage had to be hidden in the Swedish Embassy; eventually, it was smuggled out of Chile as diplomatic material, and the film was finished in Cuba and France. The cinematographer, Jorge Muller-Silva, was arrested by the military regime, tortured and murdered. "I think

The filmmaker who chronicled Allende's fall is still revealing his country's unspoken history.

they picked him to give an example, to make people frightened," Mr. Guzmán said.

For all its international prizes, "The Battle of Chile" has never been shown in theaters in Chile. Even though the country has had a democratic government since 1991, it is a land where discussions of the past are, in the words of Isabel Allende, the Chilean novelist and niece of Salvador Allende Gossens, "in really bad taste." So, it's haunting to imagine what happened to the people — copper miners, soldiers and radical students alike — who spoke fearlessly to the cameras for Mr. Guzmán and his colleagues. How many were killed or imprisoned? How many were, like the filmmaker himself, forced into exile?

"I thought about them all the time," Mr. Guzmán said. "I was always asking exiles, 'This worker at that factory, what has happened to him?' The people in 'The Battle of Chile' were well known. So there was reason to worry."

This month, from Wednesday through Sept. 22, in a kind of cinematic commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the military coup, some of the rest of this story will come clear at Film Forum in Manhattan. The second part of "The Battle of Chile," which covers the coup, will be shown with Mr. Guzmán's latest documentary, "Chile, Obstinate Memory," which was made in Santiago three years ago.

This pairing provides the unusual opportunity to see one film artist sustain an inquiry into the life of a troubled country over the course of decades. But then, Chile is the subject that defines Patricio Guzmán's creative purpose, though he hasn't lived in his homeland for a long time. He has made films about village life in Mexico ("Les Barrières de la Solitude") and liberation theology ("La Croix du Sud"), but he is regularly drawn back to Chile and its national identity, as if he were slowly fashioning a sort of epic poem.

IN 1986, while the military was still in power, Mr. Guzmán returned to Santiago and secretly filmed "In the Name of God," a documentary about the role of the Roman Catholic Church in protecting human rights. That film was really another chapter of "The Battle of Chile," and is "Obstinate Memory."

"My life has been dominated by the coup," Mr. Guzmán admitted. "I feel stunned by it, and I never could get rid of it. I think all exiled people have the same feeling. You eventually get by. But you are marked your whole life."

The documentary maker Frederick Wiseman believes that Mr. Guzmán's films themselves serve as "a kind of national memory." "Guzmán's been able to do a lot, whereas in a country like Spain almost nothing is done with suppressed memories," Mr. Wiseman said.

Indeed, the new Guzmán movie is anchored by one central question: What is memory in a culture in which there is a consensus to forget?

Mr. Guzmán views post-dictatorship Chile as a land in which affluence counts for more than history, in which the loud confrontations of the Allende period and the cruelties that followed the coup are unspoken national secrets. "There is this feeling in our country that people who talk about our history are losers," the director said. "Nobody likes it."

Of course, Mr. Guzmán is full of memories. He starts the new film at the exact moment many of his countrymen would most like to forget — with the Chilean Air Force's bombing on Sept. 11, 1973 of La Moneda, the presidential palace, an action that represented the end of the Allende era.

The present quickly intrudes on this dramatic moment of the past as the camera

Continued on Page 14

Keeping Chile's Memory Alive

Continued From Page 7

switches to the recollections of a balding, middle-aged man: Juan, one of the few surviving bodyguards of Allende. "On the 11th of September," Juan says, "I was to get married at 9:30. But by 9, we were fighting at La Moneda. I called Catalina, my fiancée, and told her we couldn't get married. A slight problem had come up."

The slight problem was, of course, the coup. Mr. Guzmán uses Juan to travel back to that other Chile. The two of them walk around the present-day Moneda, look out of windows, talk and, suddenly, the remembering seems to flow.

Mr. Guzmán then pays a call to the father of the murdered cinematographer, Muller-Silva. This elderly man, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, stoically represses tears as he shows a light meter and some photographs, the few artifacts of his son that remain.

The director visits Hortensia Bussi, the widow of Allende, who died

during the coup (by suicide, an official medical panel ruled). "Wanting to forget is self-defense," she says. "I want to forget."

Mr. Guzmán finds a group of people who were on Allende's personal staff. They sit together and watch parts of "The Battle of Chile," picking out friends they once knew, naming them, and noting: "Disappeared. Disappeared. Disappeared."

HOW did Mr. Guzmán find people to interview for the new film? "Through the buddy system," he said. "I went to remnants of the old political parties and labor unions and showed pictures of the street demonstrations. For instance, I asked around where I could find Allende's bodyguards, and I was told that they meet regularly to drink some wine in a garage in a popular barrio.

"When I met them, I felt like I found a gold mine. They are fantastic people, and they know things which nobody else knows about the final days of Allende — how he felt those last days when he was sure that he was going to die. Chile is full of historical material nobody is collecting. There doesn't exist any respect for history."

There's something of the "Candid Camera" prankster to Mr. Guzmán, and "Obstinate Memory" is full of stunts designed to force his patriots to reflect on the past. On a gleaming Santiago day, for instance, Mr. Guzmán hires a band of young musicians to play "Venceremos," the anthem of Allende's Popular Unity party, in a downtown shopping mall.

This is a song that hasn't been heard on Santiago streets in 23 years, and the various expressions on peoples' faces tell the entire Chilean story. Youngsters stare blankly. An older man holds up his fingers in a defiant "V." A well-dressed man sneers with disgust and makes real the expression "If looks could kill."

"That segment could have lasted 20 minutes; I would have liked it," Mr. Guzmán said impishly. "It was so interesting."

Less humorous but equally telling is a scene in which Mr. Guzmán

shows parts of "The Battle of Chile" to a group of old-timers and asks them to identify any Allende supporters they recognize. "Carmen Vivanco," a woman says, as she points out a passionate demonstrator. "Yes, that's Carmen Vivanco."

The Carmen Vivanco of 1996, whom Mr. Guzmán subsequently discovers, is a woman with a vacant face. "Is it you?" the director asks.

"Maybe. I'm not sure. When I was younger," she says. "It's an old photo. 23 years. Maybe. I can't be sure."

"Carmen, what members of your family disappeared?" Mr. Guzmán presses.

And quietly comes the story. "Five members of my family disappeared," she says.

Mr. Guzmán, who narrates the new documentary himself, is a gentle yet probing interviewer. He loves his countrymen, but in a certain way he also hates them. And given this ambivalence, he knows there is no way for him to live in Chile again.

"So many Chilean artists, writers and filmmakers still live in exile,"

'There doesn't exist any respect for history,' Patricio Guzmán says of Chile.

Mr. Guzmán said. "There is no work for us at home, and there's also a very negative attitude toward the exiles. When I visited, I felt that there were a lot of people who wished I wasn't there. Chile has gone back to being a very divided country, a very class-structured country, and that does not make me feel good. When the exiles come back, they are often treated very badly."

Nonetheless, Mr. Guzmán is planning another chapter in his documentary account of Chile. The working title is "Society of Memory."

"I will go with two or three cars — a little expedition," he said, "and I will project films about the time of Allende and I will drive through all the villages and little towns from the North to the South. And then, I will film the reaction of the people when they are confronted with their history."

What does he think he'll find on this cinematic road trip? "I have no idea," Mr. Guzmán replied. "It's a real exploration. The whole of Europe is thinking about memory. In European documentaries now, memory is the main subject. And it is also my subject."