



SALVADOR ALLENDE

An Icarus Films Release
A film by Patricio Guzmán

"Captivating! A beautiful testimony." —*Le Figaro*

100 mins / b&w-color / 35mm / 1.85 / Dolby SRD / 2004 / In English, French, Spanish with English Subtitles
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SYNOPSIS 1

Chilean filmmaker Patricio Guzmán is one of cinema's most acclaimed documentararians. From the pioneering *The Battle of Chile* to the more recent *The Pinochet Case*, he has used film to bring his country's present and past to life, chronicling injustice, hope, brutality and inspiration. With Salvador Allende, he turns to the life of one of the 20th century's most inspiring, and controversial, leaders, a man whose overthrow by an American-backed military destroyed not only his dream of Chilean socialism, but all those he inspired. On November 4, 1970, Salvador Allende was elected president of Chile. He committed himself to the socialist transformation of his country, a remarkable-and remarkably dangerous-goal during a time of continual strife between capitalist and communist, the United States and the Soviet Union. Three years later, he was deposed by a right-wing coup led by Augusto Pinochet, and committed suicide before being taken prisoner. His country faced two decades of military-led dictatorship, and his followers faced repression, exile or death. "Salvador Allende marked my life," says Guzmán in this heartfelt work. "I wouldn't be what I am if he had not incarnated the utopia of a just and free world." For him, Salvador Allende-the film-is important not only to chronicle the life and death of Allende, but also to present the exact history of a man whose legacy has been either defamed or exalted, but rarely understood. "I will never forget," writes Guzmán, whose film makes sure the world won't either.

SYNOPSIS 2

Salvador Allende's brief rule as President of Chile from 1970 to 1973 is a central moment in the modern history of South America. But who was Salvador Allende? Was he a Marxist, as many claim? Or was he too civilized to govern in a world of international power politics? In a moving biographical portrait, filmmaker Patricio Guzmán (*The Battle of Chile*) tells Allende's story, from his youth in Valparaiso and his early presidential campaigns, to his bold nationalist reforms and his death during the violent rightist coup of September 11, 1973.

SYNOPSIS 3

Salvador Allende gave his life for Chile, his country.

Founder of the Chilean Socialist Party, an adamant Marxist without being a theorist. He was above all a humanist, a "gentleman" among political figures.

Parliament member at 28, the enlightened young bourgeois man inexhaustibly covered his country from north to south to listen, discuss, persuade.

Presidential candidate in 1952, 1958 (near win) and 1964, he was defeated each time. He took up the fight again, firmly rooted in the democratic game.

On November 4, 1970, he was elected president. Obsessed by a fastidious respect of democracy and its institutions, he committed his entire being to the socialist transformation of his country. A unique event for the world.

For the "free world", the danger was intolerable. The event was much more subversive than the recent Cuban slap. American dollars flowed in massive quantity to destabilize the country, organize and arm the extreme Right, and prepare for a military coup d'état.

For Allende, democratic rule remained central: it was necessary to fight the adversary through legal means and win time to convince.

This love for respect of the law, for democracy, for politics, cost him his life and plunged Chile into the long night of fascism for over 17 years.

Allende's choice was highly criticized by his friends and loved ones. Faced with the democratic breakdown by right-wing pressure, was it necessary for him to put forward the same methods and arm the people who supported him?

The question remains open still today.

Was Allende's stand a suicidal attitude or a lesson in democracy?

Allende's passion for democracy is at the heart of this voyage into my country's history.

A country without documentation, is like a family without photos.

An empty memory.

—Synopsis 3 by *Patricio Guzmán*

PUBLICITY QUOTES

"Sometimes movies have as a mission to break some deafening silences. Who, better than Patricio Guzmán, could risk such a task? Intimate and distanced, the tribute, far from being stiff, is carried on the melancholy breath of History."

—Olivier de Bruyn, *Première*

"Even in the way it is structured, Salvador Allende goes beyond simply mixing archival footage and testimonies. If all the ingredients of a classic documentary are present, they are sublimated – in the alchemical sense of the term – into a freer form that is characterized by philosophical reflection on a political ideal, on a portrait of the Chilean militant leftist group invoked by Guzmán, and as autobiography."

—Emmanuel Chicon, *L'Humanité*

"Perfectly documented, emotional in its testimonies and a return to the site of the events that, yesterday, plunged Chile into chaos, this film sheds light on a man, still respected in silence in his own country, where fear continues to rule."

—Thierry Chèze, *Studio Magazine*

"What the world knows of Chile in the 1970s, it knows through the films of Patricio Guzmán." —Seattle Post-Intelligencer

"Rich, strong... assuredly striking and patiently collated in a precise historical work... unites political and historical events to create an American entity tinged with Europe, an entity completely Latin."

– Christophe Salmon, *Synopsis*

"He humanizes one of the last century's most enigmatic and tragic figures, and makes an almost forgotten episode of modern history come vividly to life."

—Andrew O'Hehir, *Salon*

"Patricio Guzmán's film is significant as a documentary piece on the accession to power of that romantic socialist after his militancy during the first years at Valparaiso until the twenty years of election campaign that brought him supreme power. It is significant also as a reflection on the contradictions of that man, an absolute legitimist who, at the cost of his life, rejected recourse to arms."

—Thierry Gandillot, *L'Express*

"A committed and moving documentary, and as such, this film constitutes a formidable introduction to that period, among the darkest of the last century."

—Emmanuel Corodde, *Ciné Live*

NOTES ON SALVADOR ALLENDE

FROM THE ARTICLE "THE BROKEN DREAM OF SALVADOR ALLENDE "

BY TOMAS MOULIAN (SEPTEMBER 2003 LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE)

"The Chilean president won't go down in history because of his death, but because of his life. His death will reinforce the myth. Because of his political instinct and his historical realism, he has come to represent the expression of a 'new method' of attaining socialism, at a moment where signs of real social crisis are already being felt. His suicide was an act of combat. On that terrible morning of September 11, the president passed from pain to lucidity. "

FROM AN ARTICLE BY PAULO PARANAGUA (SEPTEMBER 2003 LE MONDE)

"His tomb has become a place of pilgrimage", points out Patricio Guzmán... The person in charge of its maintenance brings to the Salvador Allende Foundation, located in old Santiago, numerous letters left by faithful visitors. However, "the dictatorship tried to crush all traces of Allende. The gigantic machine of defamation functioned at once, in a brutal way. If the memory of Allende has remained alive, it has been confined to the intimacy of private homes. Young people respect the integrity symbolized by his death, but they don't know the history behind it. There is still no real biography of Allende, based on research among witnesses and various sources...".

"Chile is an island surrounded by mountains," according to Patricio Guzmán. Once made fun of for his "socialism of wine and empanadas," the least of Salvador Allende's worth would be to put a whole population in motion and share with their dreams with the rest of the world..."

SELECTED FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

2004 Cannes Film Festival
Best Documentary, 2004 Lima Latin American Film Festival
2004 Toronto International Film Festival
2005 Miami International Film Festival
2006 Palm Springs International Festival
2004 San Sebastian International Film Festival
2004 Sheffield International Film Festival
2004 Cardiff International Film Festival
2004 Barcelona International Film Festival
2004 IFI Stranger Than Fiction Documentary Film Festival & Market

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHY

Patricio Guzmán was born in 1941 in Santiago, Chile. As an adolescent, inspired by the work of Chris Marker, Frederic Rossif and Louis Malle, he was drawn to documentary. He studied filmmaking at the Film Institute at the Catholic University of Chile and at the Official School of Film in Madrid, where he earned his degree in Film Direction in 1970.

Guzmán returned to Chile in 1971, and directed his first documentary, *The First Year*, which covered the first 12 months of Salvador Allende's government. The film was released in commercial theaters that very year. Chris Marker, impressed by the film, offered to help get it seen in France. Two years later, Marker again provided invaluable assistance again when he donated the raw stock necessary to commence filming *The Battle of Chile*, Guzmán's 4 and ½ hour documentary trilogy about Allende's final year. Filming on this project continued until the very day of the coup d'etat.

The day of the coup, Guzmán was imprisoned in Chile's National Stadium, where he remained for 15 days. After regaining his freedom, he left for Europe with his footage. Eventually, the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) offered to support the editing and post-production. Guzmán flew to Havana and finished the film a few years later.

The Battle of Chile won 6 Grand Prizes in Europe and Latin America. It was shown in commercial theaters in 35 countries. The *Cineaste* Magazine declared it as "One of the ten best political films in the world."

Guzmán continues to make documentaries, many focusing on Chilean concerns. In 1987 he made *In God's Name* (Grand Prize, Florence '87) about the Catholic Church's fight for human rights in Chile. From 1990 to 1992 he worked on *The Southern Cross* (Grand Prize, Marseille '92) about the theology of liberation and popular religion in Latin America. In 1995, *Town in Stasis* focused on the historical memory of a Mexican village.

In 1997, *Chile, Obstinate Memory* looked into collective political amnesia in Chile. 1999 brought *Robinson Crusoe Island* about the remote Chilean island of the same name. In 2001, *The Pinochet Case* examined the case brought against General Augusto Pinochet (Grand Prize, Marseille '01). In 2002, he completed *Madrid*, a look at Spain's capital.

Guzmán's acclaimed, award-winning film *Salvador Allende* (2006) tells Allende's story, from his youth in Valparaiso and his early presidential campaigns, to his bold nationalist reforms and his death during the violent rightist coup of September 11, 1973.

The master filmmaker's gorgeous and personal meditation new work, *Nostalgia for the Light* (2010), won the Best Documentary (Prix ARTE) at the European Film Academy Awards. It was named to the Top Ten Best Movies of 2010 by Sight & Sound, and it is to be released in the US and Canada in 2011 by Icarus Films.

Patricio Guzmán currently chairs the International Documentary Film Festival (FIDOCs) in Santiago, Chile, which he founded in 1997. He lives in Paris with Renate Sachse, who collaborates on the scripts for his films. His two daughters, Andrea and Camila, are also filmmakers and frequently collaborate on his projects.

PATRICIO GUZMÁN FILMOGRAPHY

- 2010 **"Nostalgia for the Light" (102').***
Director-writer.
--- Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival, France, 2010
--- Official Selection, Toronto International Film Festival, 2010
- 2005 **"My Jules Verne" (52')**
Director-author. Biographical documentary about Jules Verne produced by Ex Nihilo for ARTE France. Festivals: Compiègne, France. BAFICI, Buenos Aires. Latin American, Sao Paulo. FIDOCOS, Santiago de Chile.
- 2004 **"Salvador Allende" (102').***
Director-author and co-producer.
Documentary portrait of Salvador Allende produced by Jacques Bidou (JBA Productions)
Co-production with Belgium, Spain, Germany and Mexico
--- Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival, France, 2004
--- Best European Documentary of Creation, Biennial Spanish Film Festival of Annecy, 2004.
---Grand Prize, Lima Latin American Film Festival, 2004.
--- Audience Award, Salzburg Film Festival, 2005
Festivals (2004-2006): Toronto / San Sebastian / Jerusalem / Lussas / Rio / Sao Paulo / Sheffield / Trieste / Gutenberg / Vienna / Lucerne / Minneapolis, MOMA / Lussas / Copenhagen / Mill Valley / Oslo / Bergen / Strasbourg / Cardiff / Gutenberg / Adelaide / Guadalajara / Freiburg / Slovenia / Istanbul / Singapore / Doxa Canada / Flaherty Film Seminar / Nuremberg / Washington National Gallery / Taipei. Cinema distribution: France (120.000 viewers), Chile (60.000), Argentina (10.000), Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Greece, Italy, Austria, Mexico and United States. Sales for TV: RTBF, Sundance Channel.
- 2001 **"The Pinochet Case" (110').***
Director-author and co-producer. Documentary about the trial of Augusto Pinochet.
Produced by Les Films d'Ici (Paris), Pathé (Paris), Les Films de la Passarelle (Brussels), Patricio Guzmán (Madrid), Benece (Barcelona) and Nueva Imagen (Santiago).
--- International Critic's Week, Cannes Film Festival, France, 2001.
--- First Prize, Marseille Int'l Documentary Film Festival, France, 2001.
---Golden Gate Award, San Francisco Int'l Film Festival, 2002.

Festivals: Toronto 2001, Montreal 2001, Florence 2001, Sheffield 2001, Rio de Janeiro 2001, Valladolid 2001, Bogotá 2001, Lisbon 2001, Guadalajara 2002. Etc.

Sales for TV: Canal Plus in France, Belgium, Spain, Italy.

Cinema distribution: France (60.000 viewers), Mexico (80.000), Belgium, Spain, Chile and USA. Sales for TV: Canal + International, Canal Horizons, Kino Suisse, SBS Australia, Globosat Brazil.

1999 **“Isla de Robinson Crusoe” (43’).***

Director-author. Documentary about the island of the same name. Produced by Jacques Bidou (JBA Productions) for La Sept-ARTE.

1997 **“Chile, Obstinate Memory” (58’).***

Director-author. Documentary on Chile's historical memory. Produced by Les Films d'Ici and the National Film Board of Canada for La Sept-ARTE.

Première: special screening at the Festival Du Réel, Paris, 1997.

---Grand Prize, Florence International Film Festival, Italy, 1997.

--- Audience Award, Marseille Int'l Documentary Film Festival, 1997.

---Golden Gate Award, San Francisco Int'l Film Festival, USA 1998.

--- Best Canadian Documentary, Hot Docs Festival, Canada, 1998..

---Second Documentary Prize, Havana Film Festival, 1997.

--- Grand-Prix, Yorkton International Documentary Film Festival, Canada, 1998.

---Best Documentary Film, Saint Louis International Film Festival, USA., 1998.

---Grand-Prix, DocAviv Festival, Tel Aviv, Israel, 1999.

---Silver Dove, Leipzig Film Festival, Germany, 1999.

--- Nominated for the Canadian Academy of Film and TV, 1999.

Festivals: Sundance 98, Toronto 97, Bombay 98, Sidney 98, Mar del Plata 98, Montevideo 98, Vancouver 98, Santiago de Chile 97, etc.

Cinema Distribution: New York , Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile.

Sales for TV: France, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Italy, Finland, Greece, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Switzerland and Sundance Channel.

1995 **“Pueblo en Vilo” (52’).**

Director-author. Documentary about the historical memory of a small Mexican village.

Produced by Les Films d'Ici for France-2.

Festivals: Lisbon 1996, Leipzig 1996, Augsburg, 1996.

Sales for TV: France, Belgium, Mexico.

- 1992 **“The Southern Cross” (80’).**
 Producer, director-author.
 Feature film and documentary series on popular religion in Latin America.
 Produced by Quasar Films (Alicia Crespo) for TVE.
 ---Grand Prize, Marseille International Documentary Film Festival, France, 1992.
 ---Grand Prize, Amiens International Film Festival, France, 1992.
 ---‘Tiempo de Historia’ Award, Valladolid International Film Festival, Spain, 1992.
 --- Grand Prize, Jerusalem Film Festival, Israel, 1994.
 --- OCIC Award, Amiens International Film Festival, France, 1992..
 --- Honourable mention, Freeburg International Film Festival, Switzerland, 1993.
 Festivals: Venice, 1992. Munich 1992. Toronto 1992. Montreal 1992. San Francisco 1993. Boston 1993. Cartagena 1993. Toulouse 1993. Providence 1993. London 1993. Sundance,1993. Viña del Mar 1993. Guadalajara,1993. Philadelphia 1993. Chicago Latino 1993. Bahia 1994. Wellington 1994. Bombay 1994. Sales for TV: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway , Denmark, Luxemburg, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Mexico, Brazil.
- 1986-87 **“In the Name of God” (100’).**
 Co-producer, director-author.
 Documentary on liberation theology during Pinochet's dictatorship. Co-produced by TVE.
 ---Peace Film Award, Berlin International Film Festival, 1988.
 ---Ocic Award, Berlin International Film Festival, 1988
 ---Grand Prize, Festival dei Popoli, Florence, Italy, 1987.
 ---Documentary Award, Havana Film Festival, 1987.
 ---Glauber Rocha Award, Figueira da Foz Film Festival, Portugal, 1988. Festivals: Toronto 1987. San Sebastian 1987. Biarritz 1987. San Francisco 1988.Los Angeles 1988. Cinéma du Réel, Paris 1988. Sales for TV: Spain, England, Germany.
- 1985 **“Pre-Columbian Mexico” (5 x 30’).**
 Director-author.
 Series on the Maya and Aztec culture, produced by TVE.
- 1973-79 **“The Battle of Chile I-III” (270’).***
 Producer, director-author. Documentary trilogy about the final period of Allende's government.
 With the contribution of Chris Markey and the ICAIC of Cuba.
 ---Grand Prize, Grenoble International Film Festival, France, 1975.

---Grand Prize, Grenoble International Film Festival, France, 1976.
---Grand Prize, Brussels International Film Festival, Belgium, 1977.
---Grand Prize, Benalmádena Film Festival, Spain, 1976.
---Grand Prize, Havana Film Festival, Cuba, 1979.
---Special Jury's Prize, Leipzig Film Festival, Germany, 1977.
--- Critic's Novas Texeira Award in France, 1977.

Festivals: Cannes, Quinzaine du Réalisateurs, 1975, 1976 / Berlin, Filmforum, 1975, 1976, 1979 / Pesaro, 1975, 1976, 1981 / Moscow, 1975. London, 1979 / San Sebastian, 1979. Melbourne, 1977 / Amsterdam, 1978 / Sao Paulo, 1979 / Etc.

Cinema Distribution: Algeria, Australia, Germany, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, USA, England, Finland, France, Grenada, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland, Venezuela and former-Yugoslavia. Sales for TV: Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Spain, former East Germany, Holland, Mexico, Belgium, Cuba.

1971

"The First Year" (100'), with a prologue by Chris Marker.

Director-author. Documentary on the first year of Allende's government.

--- Fipresci Prize, Mannheim International Festival, Germany, 1973.
Cinema distribution: Chile, France, Belgium and Switzerland

* These films are distributed in the US and Canada by Icarus Films.

senses of cinema

Patricio Guzmán's *Salvador Allende*: The Personal Painting of a Universal Myth

By Pamela Biénzobas

In the early '70s, Patricio Guzmán was a young filmmaker. He had just returned home after studying in Spain. His career was barely starting when he decided to begin recording the events of his country's social and political life. Like the rest of his fellow Chileans, and the world in fact, Guzmán had no idea what those events would lead to.

This decision would mark Guzmán's work forever. Today, Patricio Guzmán is the author of some of the most complete and striking documents on the Chilean Popular Unity, the *coup d'etat* and the subsequent dictatorship. Until now, he had never dealt directly with Salvador Allende as a central topic. He had reflected, and hesitated. He feared the former President was too huge a figure to seize in a film. Finally, Guzmán overcame this fear and has made the documentary, *Salvador Allende*, which premiered at Cannes in 2004.

Salvador Allende is not really, or completely, a "portrait" of Salvador Allende, who represents too big a challenge to be confronted at present. Nor is it another contribution to the myth of the martyr President. It's predominately a testimony to the importance Allende had and continues to have in Guzmán's life. To a much greater extent than in his previous works, *Salvador Allende* is filmed in the first person. Since subjectivity is admitted from the outset, the documentary is clearly very far from being a possible hagiography. There is no attempt made to grasp the totality of the events that occurred, of Allende's biography or even to describe his persona. That is not the documentary's goal. There could be much more information included than there actually is. It doesn't matter. The challenge that Guzmán sets himself is greater than that of just conveying information. Guzmán's intention is to convey the feelings and thoughts, which Allende inspires in him, as well as in the hearts and minds of many others around the world.

This subjectivity makes writing about *Salvador Allende* an even more subjective exercise than otherwise. Previous information and personal connections will necessarily determine how far *Salvador Allende* reaches each viewer. (Though the same can be said for virtually any film.) Therefore, and though I rarely ever use the first person, I believe I should quickly state where I stand: I am Chilean,

born after the coup, and with a deep personal concern for the past 35 years of my country's history, and therefore for Salvador Allende – but without me or any close relatives having been directly involved or affected by the violence.

Thus, although I believe the documentary succeeds in transmitting the awe felt for an exceptional man, I can only guess to what extent an uninformed spectator will appreciate the film. And so, I feel, an historical overview would be useful when approaching the film. However, providing such an overview in full would be impracticable and pretentious due to the extent and weight of the endeavour, especially in this limited context, so perhaps simply to list certain facts as straightforwardly as possible would be more honest.

In 1970, representing a left-wing coalition known as the Popular Unity, socialist doctor Salvador Allende became the first Marxist president ever to be elected democratically anywhere in the world. This provoked an immediate reaction from the dominant right-wing class as well as from Nixon and Kissinger's United States. Political violence began even before he was inaugurated: in an attempt to prevent the Congress from ratifying the election (1), conspiratorial military factions and the CIA plotted to kidnap René Schneider, the Commander-in-Chief of the army, loyal to the constitution, who was ultimately killed (2).



The “Chilean experience” was closely observed and followed by the entire world, since it was the first attempt to carry out a socialist revolution, not through arms, but by constitutional means. In fact, the country remained independent from the USSR. The first months were marked by great social and economic achievements, such as the legal nationalisation of the copper mines – the country's main resource – and notable

improvements in the quality of life of the country's poorest. The growing support was expressed clearly in the 49.75% vote obtained by Popular Unity candidates in 1971's municipal elections. For all those who shared his aspirations, both inside and outside of Chile, Salvador Allende represented much more than an ideology. He was one of the most charismatic and respected political figures. But most of all, he represented hope and faith in a more just world.

Young Patricio Guzmán was one of these people. He believed in the Popular Unity's project, and was already at work filming his documentary *Primer año* (*First Year*, 1971). He went on filming when the opposition started gaining more and more power. *La respuesta de octubre* (*The October Reply*, 1972) covered a major blockade initiated by truck owners in 1972, as part of a boycott to destabilise the government.

Little by little, as he documented the increasingly agitated and aggressive atmosphere in Chilean society, Guzmán was accumulating precious material that would later become his master trilogy, *The Battle of Chile* (1975–79).

On September 11th, 1973, the military coup put an end to it all. True to his promise not to surrender the administration to which the people had appointed him, Salvador Allende killed himself when the House of Government was attacked by air and land. 17 years of an astonishingly cruel dictatorship led by Augusto Pinochet began. Murder and torture were institutionalised. Thousands and thousands fled the country, including many artists and filmmakers. Guzmán was able to smuggle his material out of the country and edit together *The Battle of Chile* overseas. Just like many of his colleagues, Guzmán continued making films about Chile in exile. In 1987, he made *En nombre de Dios (In God's Name)*, which deals with the essential role played by a part of the Church in protecting victims of the dictatorship.

Once the regime was over, a very delicate issue emerged in Chile (and still continues): that of the memory of the recent past. They say man has a short memory. But in the case of the Chilean people, it is virtually non-existent. Fortunately, many documentary makers of all generations have been insistently trying to fill in the gaps. Guzmán went back to Chile to show *The Battle of Chile*, which too few people have seen in the country. He showed it to students who, like much of the population, especially those born after the coup and in the privileged sectors of society, had barely any idea of what had occurred 25 years prior. The result was *Chile, la memoria obstinada (Chile, Obstinate Memory, 1997)*. He continued to explore the same subject when he covered Pinochet's arrest and judicial proceedings in Europe in *Le Cas Pinochet* (2001).

Guzmán has intermittently filmed Chile, the coup and its aftermath for more than 30 years. As a result, he's collected invaluable footage of his own as well as archival material, from forgotten days (and it is important to note that what Chile is really obstinate about is forgetting). He had collected so much about Salvador Allende, the man who, once he began following him during his campaign back in 1970, would become so central to his life. The time had come to pay him homage. Not to reconstruct. Not to explain. Not to try to seize the man in a film. Simply to pay him homage.

In that sense, *Salvador Allende* is not surprising at all. It is absolutely coherent, logical, predictable. Sooner or later, it had to come. It is true it could have come one way or another, and the choice to render a personal tribute instead of trying to appropriate a universal figure is surely the wisest. It's refreshing. It's essentially honest.

The French publicity poster for *Salvador Allende* (as well as playing at Cannes, the documentary also gained a theatrical release in France) essentially comprises text instead of image. Following the name of the deceased President, the first word is "I". "I remember September 11th 1973..." It is Patricio Guzmán, speaking about his memories. From all aspects, he is revealing this fundamental aspect of the film. And this is how it should be read. What is sustained throughout the 100-minute documentary is that speaking position of "I remember..." Not that the documentary is based solely on personal remembrance. On the contrary, an important part of the work is Guzmán's search for Allende through the information, the memories and the analysis that others can provide.

Salvador Allende is in a way a collage. A huge amount of material is put together in such a way that in the end a clear, larger picture emerges. The individual bits may be more or less impressive to each viewer, according to the novelty of the information, the sympathy aroused by the feelings and experiences presented, or simply due to the particular sensibility of each person. But the ensemble leaves a global impression of who the man was, what he represented, and why it was important for this film to be made.

Among the material, there is a fair amount of information. The archival footage provides striking sequences, such as the interview with the former US ambassador who articulates his country's position towards Allende and what he stood for, and their decision on how to act. Hopefully today this attitude, this cold analysis of how to violently interfere with another country's democratic processes in order to preserve one country's supremacy, should not be much of a surprise for anyone. But it is always interesting to see how history not only does not teach us anything (or, better said, we refuse to learn), but also how history seems to repeat itself in the most obvious ways.

Other words that could have perfectly well been said today, instead of more than three decades ago, are those pronounced by Allende before the United Nations General Assembly, in which he denounces the perverse economics of a global economy dominated by multinationals, and the terrible threat they represent by not being subject to any democratic control. The heartfelt speech, which provoked a standing ovation, shows the man's rhetorical talent, his lucidity and his uncompromising humanity, and will surely make those who don't know him understand why so many worldwide still regret his loss, and are certain



that, if he were still among us, he would somehow be making this world, or at least a part of it, a better place.

These and other older records are presented in a constant dialogue with the present. The filmmaker complements his testimony with those of people who knew Allende, or with others who can give another dimension of what the events in Chile represent. As in most documentaries dealing with questions of the past, it is just as much a matter of understanding yesterday's reality as it is of understanding today's. This quest leads Guzmán to different people and places. In a city that refuses to remember, it is always interesting to see how the vestiges of past horrors are currently camouflaged amongst the frantic daily routine of a modern city. Vestiges as important and unavoidable as the house where Allende used to live (Guzmán tries to talk to neighbours, but no one in this well-off bourgeois neighbourhood wants to speak), or the huge National Stadium, where the soccer games are regularly played in the middle of Santiago, and that 31 years ago served as a concentration camp where thousands were arrested, tortured and killed.

The confrontation between past and present, so dreadfully alike in their most menacing aspects and so hopelessly different in their aspirations, goes beyond the Chilean case in the parallel drawn between the tensions and violence surrounding Allende, due to "internal" opposition that later proved to have more than the simple support of the CIA, with what has been happening with Hugo Chávez in Venezuela.

For the Chilean people who want to remember, who reject the idea that in order to advance we must forget, of course *Salvador Allende* adds a meaningful piece to the puzzle. Especially because he has long been the symbol of division in society, he has been reduced to a representation of the brutal schism, turned into a uni-dimensional myth. Abroad, for those who knew him as a social leader, those who, mostly from the other side of the Atlantic, admired Allende and personally mourned his death and the defeat of his dreams, the film will also add a new dimension by placing him in the context of the society that loved and killed him. But for everyone, even for those who know nothing about Salvador Allende, the material can be very enlightening. What happened in Chile over a period of two decades does not have to do with a particular circumstance or a particular reality. It has to do with human nature, with dreams, hopes, cowardice and with the most amazing callousness. And all this is universal enough to speak to anyone who wishes to listen.

FILM CREDITS

Writer-Director
Patricio GUZMÁN

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Jacques BIDOU

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GUZMÁN

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Andréa GUZMÁN

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Universidad de Guadalajara (Mexico) and P. Guzmán Producciones (Chile)

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l'Union Européenne

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