



Commemorating the 40th anniversary of the coup d'état, 1973-2013

Memories and influence of the Allende government in contemporary Chile

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Foreword

Writing this thesis has been an inspiring and valuable experience. After getting to know several parts of Latin America in the past years I knew the master Latin American Studies at Leiden University would be the right next step after completing the bachelor Spanish Language and Culture. My bachelor thesis had been focused on the Argentine dictatorship from a literary perspective. It was interesting and challenging to focus on the same topic but in a completely different way. Another perspective: modern history. Another time period: the years preceding a dictatorship. Another country: Chile.

I am grateful to the Chileans that were willing to collaborate in my research. They wanted to tell me their memories of this painful period in their nation's past and help me understand Chile today. I also want to thank all friends made in Chile; you made me feel welcome in your country and helped me to live the Chilean way.

So many people helped me finding interviewees by using their network to give me new contacts, thank you. Especially thanks to Mr. Pablo Silva and Camila Jara for helping me to set up my first interviews before even arriving in Santiago. I am indebted to my friend Hilde, who was willing to read every word of this thesis with her critical eye concerning the English language. My supervisor, professor Patricio Silva of Leiden University, has been a great help in each phase of this project: from the idea of the topic to actually writing the thesis.

Linda Klop
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Introduction

Forty years after the day the Chilean democracy was interrupted Chile commemorates the anniversary of the coup d'état. On 11 September 1973 the government of Salvador Allende was overthrown and a military junta took over the rule of the country and remained in their seats for 17 years. The commemoration date brings several memories to the surface: memories of the day of the coup, memories of the 17 years of military government and memories of the years of socialist government preceding the coup. During the entire year a lot of attention has been aimed at the 40 year commemoration, making the past again a lively subject in contemporary Chile. A subject that was almost impossible to ignore: bookstores were loaded with works regarding this topic, television channels were filled with documentaries and many commemorating activities were organized by museums and social movements. A substantial part of the attention is directed towards the memory of the dictatorship and the human right violations during those years, but it seems to be that the memory of the government of the Unidad Popular¹ is opening up. Politicians from both sides of the political spectrum have expressed a 'mea culpa' regarding their involvement of polarizing the nation in the day's pre-1973. During those years Chile became polarized into two camps, one in favor of Allende's government and its socialist ideals and one opposed to it.

This thesis will be about the memory that the Chileans have nowadays of those years preceding the coup. The decision to research this time period instead of the more obvious choice of the memory of the military dictatorship has to do with this revived interest in the time of the Unidad Popular noticeable in Chile today. The 40 year commemoration has not passed without any disturbances in the political world. The main example of this being the commemoration ceremonies executed by the political parties. There was not one, but two separate ceremonies: one organized by the rightist government and the other by the coalition of the Left. Two sides of the political spectrum that seem to not agree about their past. In my thesis I will focus on the memories of those two sides by investigating the possible degree of polarization nowadays in Chile. I suggest that there exists a dichotomy between the memories of the Left and the Right and that these polarized memories are still of influence in contemporary Chile.

To extract the existing memories nowadays —around the 40th anniversary of the coup— in Chile, I did research in Santiago from November 2013 to January 2014. During the fieldwork I interviewed Chileans from different age groups. This meant that I could speak to people who experienced the years of the Unidad Popular themselves, as well as the younger generations which have not experienced this time personally, but do have memories because of the stories that are circulating in

¹ In English Popular Unity. From this point on I will refer to this leftwing coalition/government led by Salvador Allende as Unidad Popular or UP.

their society. The people I spoke to can be divided into two different categories, namely the leftwing and the rightwing of the political spectrum. The Left and the Right are the designations I will use to describe those two groups. This may seem incorrect and bluntly used given the fact that it are two names without the necessary differentiations. I chose those two groups as in the Chilean context they do make sense, mainly because Chileans use these words to refer to themselves and to the other group.² They use this in the context of present-day and especially when referring to the past. In the analysis of my research I have only included the interviewees that saw themselves belonging to the Left or to the Right. In the next chapter I will show how the community people belong to is theoretically relevant for the creation of (collective) memory.

Besides the social aspect of remembering, in the first chapter I will also focus on other theoretical concepts that entail the study of memory. Thereby focusing on the creation of memory and the contemporary relevance of memories. Another theoretical aspect important to this work is the conflict that is mostly involved by the creation of collective memory and especially in the case of commemoration, on which I will focus in the last section of the next chapter. Concerning Chile, conflict and division is of extra importance as it concerns memories of a time that society was highly polarized. In the second chapter I will describe the historical context in which this polarization arose by focusing on the time of Allende's government. Afterwards I will also give the historical context of the military dictatorship and the time of transition back to democracy, both focusing on the polarization in society. This chapter will help to interpret the memory question in contemporary Chile, the focal point of chapter three. Based on my research in Santiago I will explore the memories Chileans have nowadays of the coup and the preceding years of socialist government. Hereby focusing on the Left and the Right, who seem to be having two different visions on the past, especially when it comes to memories of democracy and economy. In the succeeding chapter the influence of the past in contemporary Chile will be investigated. I will show how Left and Right respond differently to the memories of the government of Salvador Allende in current affairs and how especially commemoration brings the divisions in society to the surface. Lastly, I will draw final conclusions and answer the question of how the polarization of the past is visible in the memories of contemporary Chile and how this is of influence in current affairs, focusing on the two sides of the political spectrum, i.e. the Left and the Right.

² I have to mention that although Left and Right are still commonly and dominantly used, in Chile today people do start to differentiate themselves from these two groups by seeing themselves as independent or even politically uninterested.

1. Collective memory, polarization and commemoration: a theoretical framework

Every society has collective memory and normally nations remember the traumas of their past together. The traumas for many countries of the Latin American Southern cone concern the military regimes of the 1970's. Many of these societies are marked by this period's memories as is also the case for Chile. These memories can yield polarized views on the past, which tend to come to the surface by events of commemoration. In this chapter I will take a closer look at the theoretical concept of memory and commemoration in relation to Chile's memory of the coup of September 11th 1973, the years preceding and those afterwards.

First, I will examine the content of the study of memory and the relevance of memory today and hereby focusing on the social aspect of remembering, since we remember collectively. In the second section the conflictive element of creating memory is examined and how the installation of fear and distrust is of influence on the possible polarization in Chilean society. Thirdly I will take a closer at the importance of commemoration dates and how these events can unite and divide groups in society. The study of memory from a social and political perspective has interested many scholars in the past century. In this chapter I do not pretend to give an complete overview of this scientific field, but will be focusing only on the aspects that are relevant to my research. I will do this by mostly focusing on scholars that studied the memory question in Chile. In addition I will include the ideas of some scholars that are seen as fundamental to the study of memory.

1.1 The construction of collective memory

Remembering is not simply to enumerate what happened. Remembering is not the same as a history book that tries to give a neutral overview of past events. On the contrary, memory is about subjectivity, about experiences and what those experiences mean to us. In the words of historian Steve Stern: "Memory is the meaning we attach to experience, not simply recall of the events and emotions of that experience" (Stern, 2004: 105). This aspect of studying the past is the central focus of this research. It is about the memories that pop into people's minds when talking about the time of Allende's government; the things they remember because it still has great importance to them. In her study of the memories that young Argentines today have about the Argentine dictatorship, Susana Kaiser also focuses on this aspect of remembering. In her eyes memory is not about what happened but about what we believe that happened (Kaiser, 2005: 10). The subjectivity that lies in the aspect of believing what happened has been underlined by scholar Pier Nora (1989). He was one of the first to distinguish memory from history. In this distinction memory is seen as a subjective flawed past still present within a community and is often fueled by emotion (Nora, 1989: 8-9).

Memory is just as well about the present as it is about the past, as it is memory that is still present today. This contemporary aspect of memory is underlined by many scholars. For example, according to Elizabeth Jelin “memory refers to the ways in which people construct sense or meaning to the past, and how they relate that past to their present in the act of remembering” (Jelin, 2007: 146). The reason why the study of memories is significant today is exactly because of this construction of meaning. For historians memories are not just a source to reconstruct the past, but the memories give insight in how people are thinking about the past and how they make sense of their history (Sokoloff-Rubin, 2011: 94). In other words, memory is just as well about the present as it is about the past, given the idea that memory is about the meaning people nowadays give to their history. It is exactly for this reason my research is focused on the memories of Allende’s government; to see how people today, in the present, think and make sense of their past. In the words of historian Anne Ollila, to see “the presence of the past” (Ollila, 1999: 69), on which I will focus in the second half of this work.

Remembering is not something people only do by themselves, it takes a community to stir up memories and your memories will then correspond to the memories you have as a group collectively. The idea of a collective dimension of memory originates in the theory of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. He argues that individual memories are always socially embedded. In his idea individuals construct memories from collective frameworks. He shows this by focusing on family, religion and the nation at large and how these constructions condition the way in which people create their own personal memories. Those collective frameworks are not a collection of individual memories, but those frameworks recompose an image of the past which is adapted to and confirms the dominant way of thinking of society in a certain period of time. The past is thus continually reinvented in our memories and collective memory of the past is adapted to our present needs and purposes³ (Halbwachs, 1992; Hutton, 1993: 6-7; Drunen, 2010: 16).

Later on the social factor of the creation of memories has been underlined by many scholars⁴. For example according to Jelin, a memory framework is created by the sharing of experiences. This also works the other way around; as a result of the existing framework we relate to, we are able to create and give words to our experiences and memories. Obviously in this sense, memory making is full of subjectivities (Jelin, 2007: 141). Mainly because of its subjective and relational character the creation of memory is not static and never finished. Memory is constantly under construction and in this process people (groups, individuals, and nations) are creating common ground, which we call collective memory (Klep, 2010: 261). When it comes to the production of collective memory it is

³ In chapter four I will show how both sides of the political spectrum in Chile have a collective memory that is adapted to their present needs and how they use these memories in the present.

⁴ I focus here on the ideas of Elizabeth Jelin and Katrien Klep given that their ideas are based on their studies of the Chilean memory question.

important to look at the historical circumstances in which it was and is created. It is especially important to take into account the groups that have influence in the memory making process, and the interests that those groups have⁵ (*ibid.*: 261).

Memory is not created overnight. Before explaining in the next chapter how memory was created in Chile over time, it is useful to take a closer look at the process of the creation of memory. The symbol of a memory box is used by Stern to describe this process of creating memory. For a long time the dichotomy between memory and forgetting was used to explain the memory question in Chile and other Latin American countries. In this idea the struggles for memory are seen as a struggle against oblivion. Struggling against oblivion derives from the idea that certain groups of society choose to forget about the past or certain aspects of the past. In the case of Chile, the parts of society that benefited economically of the politics of the military regime (middle and high class) developed the habit of ignoring and denying what happened in the past. In other words, they choose to not look back and moral discomfort was seen as a price to be paid in order to receive economical comfort and progress (Stern, 2006: xxvii). Stern feels that this idea is true but at the same time misleading and incomplete. In his opinion all people are looking for what is “truthful and meaningful about a great collective trauma” (*ibid.*: xxvii). Meaning that all groups of society have memories about their past, but these memories do not correspond to one general collective memory. On the contrary, the creation of collective memory is about “competing selective remembrances” (*ibid.*: xxvii). In this light Stern uses the idea of a collectively build memory box. This so called box contains several competing memory albums and also several personal loose memories that do not necessarily fit in one of the main albums. The content of these albums and loose memories are not statically in time, but people relocate, add and arrange their memories constantly (*ibid.*: xxviii). This corresponds to the idea of Jelin, in which she underlines that “there are different and even contradictory interpretations of the same past event” (Jelin, 2007: 146). As mentioned before, the next chapter will present an overview of the process of memory making in Chile doing this by taking a closer look at the content of these memories. This way the origins of the memory frameworks will be clear when I discuss the memories forty years after the military coup took place⁶.

1.2 Polarization and conflict in relation to collective memory

Memory is a social process that involves communities and individuals. Given this social aspect of memory, it is obvious that a certain degree of conflict and disagreement is involved in the presentation of memory. Jelin stresses that because of the active role of participants creating

⁵In chapter four I will focus on the groups in Chilean politics that present memories and the way this fits their interests in the example of the presidential elections that took place in 2013.

⁶In chapter three the results of my in-depth interviews will be discussed.

historical meaning, there is struggle and conflict around the creation of memory. It is the conflict of one truth to another's truth, a conflict about the legitimacy of memory (Jelin, 2007: 141).

The fight for the true and legitimate memory is even more conflictive considering that the people involved come from different backgrounds, with different values and experiences. Sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel explains the social context of remembering by speaking of the mnemonic aspect of memory. The concept of 'mnemonic socialization' means that our memory is influenced by our social environment and more specifically by their conventions, ideologies and ideas. The example given by this concept is the memory of the social upheavals in the 1960's and 1970's. Children growing up in a liberal home will remember these events quite differently as children who grow up in conservative homes (Zerubavel, 1999: 288). The different homes mentioned in this example refer to what Zerubavel calls 'mnemonic communities', meaning that we have 'socio-biographical memory' (*ibid.*: 290). In other words, we remember the things that happened to the group we belong to and those of other groups. In the words of Zerubavel this also includes "the sense of pride, pain, or shame we sometimes experience with regard to events that had happened to groups and communities to which we belong" (*ibid.*: 290). A mnemonic community has collective memory, this memory is not a collection of personal, individual memories, it only includes the memories that are shared by all members of the community. Different personal pasts thus converge into a single past that they all have in common and collectively remember (*ibid.*: 294). Given the fact that there are different mnemonic communities it only makes sense that there are mnemonic battles over the contents of collective memory. These battles are about the correct way to interpret the past and what ought to be collectively remembered in the first place (*ibid.*: 295-296). In the second part of this research I will discuss how different mnemonic communities in Chile have different memories of the Allende government and how this creates mnemonic battles.

Important about the mnemonic aspect of remembering is that it includes different groups and communities in society; groups with different ideologies and ideas. In Chilean society, a distinction is often made of two different 'mnemonic communities', one favorable of the political rightwing and the other of the political leftwing. Towards the end of the dictatorship historian Patricia Politzer demonstrates these two different communities the following way:

"For many years now, Chile has been divided into two clearly defined countries that don't look at each other, don't touch each other, and don't know each other; but they sense and fear one another. The grave danger of the situation lies in the natural progression from fear to hate, and from hate to aggression –a progression which so often ends in the logic of war, as it did in September of 1973" (Politzer, 1989: xiv).

This description shows that Chile can be seen as a society polarized in two large 'mnemonic communities'. Zerubavel shows that these communities have different collective memories. This idea is underlined by Stern's idea of different memory frameworks. The first two of his frameworks are

180 degrees opposite to each other. On the one hand remembrance of 11 September 1973 as salvation and on the other hand as cruel rupture (Stern, 2002: 14-15). Both frameworks are remembering the day of the coup d'état in correspondence to the ideology of their mnemonic community. In the next chapter we will see how these frameworks came to be and how they have influenced the memory and experiences of the dictatorship and the succeeding transition period.

As mentioned by Politzer, in Chile fear plays an important role in the remembrance of 11 September 1973. In comparison to the situations in other Latin American countries preceding the dictatorship, political scientists Juan José Linz and Alfred Stepan conclude that in Chile a big part of society felt threatened by the government of Allende and the left parties linked with this government, while in other countries, for example Argentina people did not feel threatened by the government itself but by the loss of authority of the government and the political violence of the guerilla and state terrorists (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 224-225). This may explain a different legacy in Chile as in Argentina to the coup and the surrounding years. Historian Patricio Silva underlines that the perception of threat and feelings of fear have mayor influence on the polarization of the Chilean society and on the memories of the past. According to Silva "the perception of threat becomes a historical experience which for a long time continues to produce and reproduce both loyalties and distrust" (Silva, 1999: 173). In the following chapters I will investigate whether these attitudes, of loyalty and distrust, are still visible in Chilean society forty years after the coup.

1.3 Commemoration dates and its demand to remember

Events in the past that demand our memory tend to be marked on the annual calendar. The population of a nation commemorates the highs and lows of their past together. In Europe the end of World War II is remembered in every country. For example, on every 4th of May Amsterdam's main square is filled with Dutch citizens, commemorating the people that have fallen for their country. Those commemoration dates are important in relation to the collective memory of a national trauma. Alexander Wilde uses the term 'irruptions of memory' to describe events that demand memory (Wilde, 1999: 474). These events can be unexpected, as for example the arrest of Pinochet in London in 1998⁷, but commemoration dates on the annual calendar can also be marked as 'irruptions of memory'. Wilde describes those events as following:

"Public events that break in upon Chile's national consciousness. Unbidden and often suddenly, to evoke associations with symbols, figures, causes, ways of life to which a unusual degree are associated with a political past that is still present in the livid experience of a major part of the population" (Wilde, 1999: 475).

⁷ More detailed information of this event is given in chapter 2.3.

The events are seen as public because of the media coverage they receive and the involvement of authority on the political and institutional level (Wilde, 1999: 475). The political aspect of commemoration has also been expressed by Ollila, she argues that “commemoration is a political act of constructing identity” (Ollila, 1999: 85). The construction of identity and collective memory involves conflict as discussed in the preceding section. Wilde shows this conflictive element in his description of Chilean irruptions of memory: “Chile becomes an arena of deeply divided public discourse, shot through with contending and mutually exclusive collective representations of the past” (Wilde, 1999: 475). In the preceding section I have shown that Chile can be seen as divided into two large ‘mnemonic communities’, that have complete oppositional memories of the coup. These differences come again to the surface on those commemoration dates.

Similar to Wilde’s description of commemoration dates and other events that demand memory is the idea of Steve Stern of ‘memory knots’, which are “the specific human groups and leaders, specific events and anniversary or commemoration dates, and physical remains or places that demanded attention to memory” (Stern, 2006: 1). These memory knots interrupt in everyday life and many times stir up polemics about memory. In chapter 4 I will discuss the concept of commemoration in contemporary Chile extensively.

Commemoration dates do not only make divisions and polemics visible, they also give insight in the memories of that given moment. In other words how the past is seen and presented in the present. For Jelin this captures the importance of commemoration dates:

“Such moments are markers, occasions where the clues to what is going on at the subjective and the symbolic level are more visible, where the memories of different societal actors are enacted and become the present, bringing out and expressing the stories and the traces of the past that partake in the development of shared social and public, even officially sanctioned, memories” (Jelin, 2007: 145).

According to Jelin commemorations that are focused on past painful events have the tendency to open up the way for emotional remembering through testimonies and personalized narratives. It gives the opportunity to tell what is silenced, to acknowledge what is neglected and to gain knowledge of unknown stories. Commemoration dates have to tendency for society to reorganize the facts and their perspectives (Jelin, 2007: 145).

Commemoration ceremonies can unite nations while remembering the past together, but at the same time those dates also give reason for discussion. Discussions about what should be commemorated, take for example the 4th of May in the Netherlands. Should they only commemorate the victims of World War II or also the victims of other wars? Should it only be about the victims or should there be a positive note in remembering their freedom? Jelin focuses on this debate that regularly arises around commemoration, involving two different aspects. First of all the meaning that those dates have. Different groups and people attach different meanings to specific commemoration

dates, which is only logical given the fact that there are several societal interpretations of the past. Secondly which dates are to be commemorated and which ones are not is also point of debate (Jelin, 2007: 143). The underlying question here is who wants to remember what? Furthermore, commemoration dates do not only have different meanings because there are different interpretations of the past, there are also different meanings as parts of society shape the struggles they are experiencing today in relation to these commemoration dates (*ibid.*: 143).

In Chile the commemoration date that is considered as the most important and which receives the most extensive attention is the day of the coup d'état, 11 September⁸. Social scientists María Barrera, Tomás Koch and Benigno Aguirre have investigated the different meanings of this commemoration date to the Chilean people and their behavior on this date. They conclude the following:

“To some of them, the date remains the day of Allende’s death and the end of the political dream he embodied. To others it represents salvation from communism; to others, the beginning of repression, death, and exclusion. To still others, it symbolizes the unkept promise of a fair society. And for others, it is the hope of a new culture of acceptance and inclusiveness, in which new values can coexist with more traditional viewpoints” (Barrera, Koch and Aguirre, 2013: 128).

This conclusion shows that the first named meanings of 11 September commemoration are about their meanings in relation to the past. The other interpretations refer to the struggles as part of society finds itself in nowadays. They use the commemoration date to show their struggles by framing it in relation to the past: an unkept promise and the hope of inclusiveness in society.

Summarizing this chapter, memory is about the meaning we attach today to past events. We remember collectively, meaning that our own memories are created in reference to a collective memory framework existing in the community we belong to. Due to the social aspect of remembering and the communities in which we remember, there is a conflictive element entailed in this process. Creating collective memory, and specifically commemorating, causes debate and divisions in society since past events are experienced and remembered differently and these divisions are often contradictory. In the following chapter I will investigate how ideological positions created a polarized society during the government of Allende and the effects of this polarization during the dictatorship and the transition back to democracy.

⁸ In chapter 4.2 I will cover the commemoration date of the coup d'état extensively.

2. Chile, a polarized society: a historical background 1970-2010

Commemorating the 40th anniversary of the military coup on 11 September 1973, Chile has to find reconciliation with three time periods in their history: the time before the coup, the time of the military regime and the transition period of returning to democracy⁹ (Larraín and Núñez, 2013: 240). This chapter will give an historical background of these three periods, while focusing on the polarization that became extremely high during the government of Allende and which eventually led to the military coup. I will describe the origins of this polarization and the preservation of these divisions post 1973. Hereby explaining the influence this polarization had on the memories of the coup. Generally, the time of Allende and the coup ending it has been experienced in contradicting which has led to two ways of remembering on which I will focus on in the next chapter. This chapter will give the historical context with the aim of better understanding the memory question in Chile today, forty years later.

2.1 Allende's socialist project and the disappearance of the political center

On 4 September 1970 Chile elected Salvador Allende as president for a six-year term with a narrow majority of 36.2 percent to 34.9 percent of the rightwing candidate Jorge Alessandri. After running for president for many years finally the impossible happened, a Marxist-Socialist president was elected with his leftwing coalition Unidad Popular. Traditionally Chile constituted of a tripartite electorate forcing the formation of political coalitions on the Right, Center and Left (Valenzuela, 1978: 1-11; Oppenheim, 2007: 12-21). An important aspect of the Chilean political traditions was the creation of consensus. Typically the political system was able to compromise. Compromise was being indispensable because “no single party or tendency was capable of winning the presidency on its own. Either the presidency was won by a small plurality or shifting centrist groups became the key to the election” (Valenzuela, 1987: 7). As mentioned above, in the presidential election of 1970 Allende did win on his own, as none of the coalitions were willing to work together (*ibid.*: 7). In this section I will show the origins of the polarization in Chile. In other words how the ‘mnemonic communities’¹⁰ of the Left and Right mentioned in chapter one were developed and how they became enemies, eventually leading to the breakdown of democracy.

Since the late 1930's the tripartite division in Chile was maintained. From 1958 till 1973 the three coalitions took turns governing the country (Oppenheim, 2007: 21). To win, political coalitions needed the support of one of the other sides. In the 20th century only two exceptions are found to

⁹ These are the words of Fernando Montes, rector of the Albert Hurtado University, in a essay reflecting in reconciliation at the time of the 40th anniversary of the coup.

¹⁰ In chapter 1 I have explained Zerubavel's theory on mnemonic communities (1996) and that in the Chilean case the nation can be viewed in two big ‘mnemonic communities’: Left and Right.

this practice, in 1958 with the election of the rightist Jorge Alessandri and in 1970 with the election of Salvador Allende. In 1958 the political center joined the rightists government, this way Chile's political system was able to cope with a minority presidency which at first rejected compromise (Valenzuela, 1987: 7-13). During the presidency of Allende this centrist support was not formed. This failure is seen as one of the main causes of the collapse of Chilean democracy (Valenzuela, 1978; Oppenheim, 2007; Falcoff, 1991). Already during the political campaign each of the three political coalitions were running with their own candidate. Due to disappointment and anger toward the administration of the then sitting centrist president Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-1970) the Right had abandoned the centrist groups, which gave way to the Left to get elected with a little bit over a third of the vote (Constable and Valenzuela, 1991: 22-23; Oppenheim, 2007: 31).

In Chile the party system can be characterized as highly competitive and polarized. Arturo Valenzuela notices in his study of Chilean politics that generally the political center has no specific ideas of their own and constitutes of the erosion of the Left and the Right (Valenzuela, 1987: 6). Change to this practice came with the rise of the Christian democrats¹¹ in the 1960's, with this party the centrist consensus eroded (Valenzuela, 1987: 5-7). Another point that contributed to the polarization in Chile is the important role of party affiliation in Chilean society. As Valenzuela puts it:

“A substantial portion of the electorate either supported parties committed to radical transformation of the social and political structure or parties vehemently opposed to any change in the status quo” (Valenzuela, 1978: 4).

Besides a strong party affiliation, Chilean society has always been seen extremely segmented into different social classes. The lower or popular class is typically formed by peasants and laborers. The middle class consists out of a heterogeneous group of teachers, small merchants and other professionals. The upper class is formed mostly by businessmen and landowners. Several scholars¹² point out that the political polarization is not necessarily consistent with these social forces because these groups can be seen as “internally fragmented and giving loyalty to different political parties” (Oppenheim, 2007: 5). The Chilean party system and its political and social polarization was structured along the lines of political ideology (Oppenheim, 2007: 14; Valenzuela, 1987: 11).

Political compromise and consensus, as seen above, have always been essential in the political party system of Chile and the erosion of center consensus is seen as one of the main causes of the collapse of the democratic system (Oppenheim, 2007; Valenzuela, 1978). Initially, the support of the centrist Christian democrats toward the government of the Unidad Popular looked promising, after all they voted for Allende in the congressional runoff (Falcoff, 1991: 260). However, during the three

¹¹ Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC, in English: Democratic Christian Party).

¹² Among others, Louise Oppenheim (2007), Arturo Valenzuela (1987), Pamela Constable and Arturo Valenzuela (1991).

years of the administration of Allende the center was pushed further and further to the Right, creating extremely high and intense polarization (Oppenheim, 2007: 66-67).

In order to correctly understand the social and political crisis that unfolded from 1970 to 1973 a look at the link between the economic situation and politics is needed. Everywhere in the world it is evident that political and economic decisions are intertwined and major political decisions mostly concern economic development. Between the different political ideologies it is hard to find consensus of how to manage the economy, due to the different meanings of economic development and the groups of society it concerns (Oppenheim, 2007: 6). In a reflection of the Allende years, Sergio Bitar, who was Minister of Mining and Energy during the Allende administration, names several topics of conflict and crisis. Namely, the struggle for property, the fight for the distribution of income, international economic relations and conflict with the United States and the rising of the black market (Bitar, 1995: 173-201).

In the first year under the administration of Allende Chile's economy flourished and the supporters of the government were euphoric. By 1971, during the municipal elections the electorate voted in favor of the UP government that obtained 49 percent of the vote. The parties of the political Right were shocked by their defeat and the sentiment in politics and society seemed to be in favor of the UP (Oppenheim, 2007: 48). At the same time these results already show the polarization in which society was finding themselves. Valenzuela explains that the electorate made a choice between a UP coalition and the more status-quo oriented opposition. Support was given to the political extremes and all centrist-oriented parties lost support in comparison to the previous elections (Valenzuela, 1978: 54). During the first year the government nationalized the copper industry, agrarian land was redistributed, workers' salaries were raised, and prices for basic goods were fixed at an extremely low level so that workers would be able to buy food and other necessary items (Oppenheim, 2007: 48-56). Although the spirit soared in the first few months, at the end of 1971 the political conflict had heightened. The political parties of the Right became more openly oppositional towards UP policies, especially with regard to the socialization of the economy and the redistribution of wealth (Oppenheim, 2007: 56-59). At the political level the polarization of two extremes became stronger. On top of that, when the economic situation started to deteriorate in 1972 society also started to polarize openly in favor and opposed to the government of Allende (Oppenheim, 2007: 59-64). One of the main concerns of the population was the extremely high inflation and food shortages that made people stand in line for hours to buy basic goods (Falcoff, 1991: 68-72).

One of the first events of mass mobilization in opposition of UP policies was the so-called 'March of the Empty Pots' in December 1971, in which upper and middle class women protested against the shortage of food and the Marxist government by slamming their empty pots (Ardiles, Mesa and Urra, 2012: 163). A year later, in October of 1972, the biggest mass mobilization act in opposition to

Allende's government was organized. All truck drivers took strike action, as they felt threatened by UP policies, therewith paralyzing the country and its economy. Other groups of society joined and the strike lasted for a month (Ardiles, Mesa and Urrea, 2012: 164-165; Oppenheim, 2007: 62-64). At the same time in those years the masses also mobilized in favor of Allende's policies. Mobilization was seen as part of the political game. The atmosphere of political mobilization turned more and more into political confrontation, since the leftist government was not able to compromise with the political Center . With the October strike, party mobilization turned into a direct mobilization organized by businessmen trying to protect their economic interests (Valenzuela, 1978: 78). Chilean historian María Góngora describes this violent atmosphere the following way:

“It was like a civil war, not yet armed, but catastrophic, similar to the last months of the Spanish Republic, before July 1936. It was a reflection of the global ideological war between irreconcilable conceptions; it was more than a war of social classes, it was a war of passions that destroyed forever the image of moderate and stable Chile (Ardiles, Mesa and Urrea, 2012: 204).¹³

The polarization and violent atmosphere grew stronger and turned society and politics into two camps that hated each other and unable to reach consensus. The group in opposition to Allende's government grew bigger as centrist elements turned against UP policies; middle class, workers and the Christian democrats (Oppenheim, 2007: 66).

Among others, all this boiled down to the breakdown of democracy on 11 September 1973. The *coupe d'état* enforced by the army was supported by many parts of society. The business community was one of the groups that most strongly supported the coup and during the government of Allende they executed non-stopping acts of economic sabotage to destabilize the government (Constable and Valenzuela, 1991: 200). For those and many other people the coup was seen as a relief, a solution to the social and economic chaos the country found itself in, a salvation of communism. At the same time “the coup was the beginning of the end of the political dream of millions of people that wanted to create revolutionary and cultural change through *poder popular*” (Gómez-Barris, 2009: 22-23)¹⁴. For many of the UP supporters the years of the Allende administration, especially the first few months, were experienced as a euphoric time, a time in which the traditional system was changing in a more equal and righteous system (Constable and Valenzuela, 1991: 24). Those different experiences of the years 1970 to 1973 led to different perceptions of the military intervention and the years of dictatorship.

¹³ Translated from Spanish by the author.

¹⁴ Cursive text marked by the cited author. In English *popular power* or *people's power*.

2.2 Pinochet's Chile and the dichotomization of the Chilean society

On the morning of 11 September 1973 the expected, but the unusual happened. The army bombed the presidential palace and the administration of President Salvador Allende was overthrown in a violent coup d'état. A few hours before Allende died he turned to his people for the last time:

"I have faith in Chile and its destiny. Other men will overcome this gray and bitter moment, where treason tries to impose itself. May you continue to know that, much sooner than later, the great avenues will again open, where free man can walk to build a better society" (Stern, 2006: 11-12).

The bitterness of Allende's final words reflects the polarization of Chilean society during the UP and the different perceptions of the coup. At one side, people were dancing and celebrating their salvation of a chaotic society and a Marxist-government. On the other side it was the end of a political dream, a time of hope of a better and more equal society. For these people this moment marked the beginning of gray days in which repression and fear ruled the day. For others it meant a time of order and economic better days (Constable and Valenzuela, 1989: 29-30). In short, a polarized society also produces polarized opinions and memories of preceding events and time. In my opinion this seems to be the case in Chilean society concerning memory of the coup. The following section will explain the development of different memories by focusing on the ideas of historian Steve Stern, to show how the Chilean society stayed divided during the military coup.

The junta presented their intervention in the rule of the country "as the salvation of a society in ruins and on the edge of a violent bloodbath" (Stern, 2006: 2). This is one of the 'memory frameworks' that Stern uses to describe the memory question in Chile in the 1970's. The military regime imposed this framework as the official memory and meaning of 11 September 1973, for them it was a way of legitimizing their rule of the country. The military government presided by Augusto Pinochet was presented as the only way to have an orderly and secure society (Silva, 1999: 176). In general, we could say that the military government turned out to be quite successful in imposing their official collective memory on society. Polls in 1974 showed that about 80 percent of the population supported the junta. The recent memory of food shortages, social disorder, hatred and fear made that segments of society supported the military government unconditionally and justified the state of war the junta pronounced against the subversives (Politzer, 1989: 93-99; Stern, 2006: 73-74).

At the same time oppositional memory was created; completely opposite to aforementioned experiences, the coup and the following military regime were remembered as "an astonishingly cruel and unending rupture of life – an open wound that cannot heal" (Stern, 2006: 2). These people became the targets of the military repression, the so-called subversives and their relatives. For this group of society, the coup and the following years were characterized by repression and fear (*ibid.*:

2). The military declared the nation in a state of war; a war fought against the threat of leftist subversives, aimed at cleansing the nation. The Chilean Human Rights Commission created after the dictatorship estimated a number of 2300 deaths (Oppenheim, 2007: 103). In the 1970's it were the female relatives in their search for their missing husbands and children that demanded attention to this collective memory (Stern, 2006: 121).

Even though the majority of society had supported the military coup, later on more people turned against the military junta. The memory framework created by this group is one of 'persecution and awakening' (Stern, 2006: 2). Due to concerns of human right violations, religious and solidarity activists pushed this memory framework into the public domain (*ibid.*: 2). In 1978 Pinochet created a law that granted amnesty to all acts of violence committed between 1973 and 1978 by the military junta. This law formalized a fourth framework that was already circulating in society. Driven by the wish to turn back to normal life the Chileans were encouraged to close the memory of a dirty but necessary past of violence and repression (*ibid.*: 138).

As mentioned before, the period after the coup was characterized by fear. A fear not only experienced by groups that bore the burden of military repression, but the nation as a whole was paralyzed by fear. As Patricia Politzer describes it:

"It affects not only those who suffer cruelty or censorship directly but also those who are indifferent to dictatorship, and even those who support and justify it; because they, too, are caught in a system that determines what we can and cannot do, what we think, what we create, what we dream, and what we suppress" (Politzer, 1989: xiii).

All groups of society were afraid to a certain extent. Businessmen were afraid to criticize the junta, afraid to lose their social status. Leftist party members and their relatives were afraid of the military repression aimed directly at themselves. People were afraid of communism and their memory of the UP government, which made them close their eyes to the violence and human right violations happening in their country¹⁵ (Constable and Valenzuela, 1990: 144-145; Silva, 1999: 176-179).

Political ideology, memories of the UP and support of Pinochet and his military regime were not the only sources of division within society these days. Dichotomization was even more about the winners and losers of the Pinochet years in the economic sense. Pinochet and a group of economists of the University of Chicago, the so-called Chicago boys, had completely reformed the economic system. A neoliberal economic plan was implemented which focused on economic liberalization and privatization, and the state withdrew from overseeing the economy (Oppenheim, 2007: 27). This economic system made some people prosper, while others became the victims of this economic approach. In the words of political scientist Lois Oppenheim polarization in these days was defined in

¹⁵ In chapter 1 have shown that the installation of fear during the dictatorship and the years preceding have influence on memory and the way people see each other.

wealth: “Chile became a more polarized society in terms of wealth and income, with a greater gap between the rich and poor, a larger number of poor, and a more openly opulent lifestyle for the rich” (*ibid.*: 141). The neoliberal approach had lowered the average living standards of the poor, the number of unemployment had increased and people were working below their professional level (Constable and Valenzuela, 1990: 225-236). On the other side of society, malls were build, salaries were raised and credit cards opened the way to a more materialized society (Constable and Valenzuela, 1990: 205; Stern, 2006: 168-169).

Due to economic crisis in the beginning of the 1980s people mobilized and openly expressed openly their dissatisfaction with the economic situation and the military regime. A massive popular movement demanded a direct return to democracy. This mass mobilization was not able to bring down the military government, but political leaders took over the leadership role and started negotiating with the junta about a return to democracy. According to the 1980 constitution there was a plebiscite planned in 1988 and the opposition decided to try to return to democracy by playing according to the rules of the junta (Oppenheim, 2007: 143-166). The results of the 1988 plebiscite, that voted Pinochet out of power, show a deep division among the voters (Constable and Valenzuela, 1990: 305). While 44 percent voted in support of Pinochet, another 55 percent voted against the continuation of military rule (Oppenheim, 2007: 162). In other words, a little less than half of the country stayed supportive to Pinochet and its regime, the other half wanted to return back to democracy.

Regarding polarization we can say that during the dictatorship, society was polarized on different levels. At one side people remembered the coup as salvation, on the other side it was remembered as a cruel rupture. On one side people wanted justice for the human right violations, on the other side people wanted to close this memory of necessary repression and violence. On the one side you had people that had economically prospered by the neo-liberalist approach, on the other side people were poorer than ever. On the one side people were loyal to their president and savior Pinochet, on the other side people wanted to return back to democracy.

2.3 Division and consensus in Chile’s democratic transition

President Patricio Aylwin, a Christian democrat, was elected as the first president of the new democracy in 1990. At the evening of his inauguration he addressed all Chileans in an emotional speech in the National Stadium. A place that had been the first site of repression in the days after the coup d’état in 1973 and now a symbolic place for national cleansing (Oppenheim, 2007: 209). The Chilean democratic transition is regarded as one the most successful in the region (Silva, 1999: 171).

Although successful, the transitional governments faced many challenges. In this section I will focus on several points of conflict during the transition period.

One of the challenges the new democratic government had to face was the many undemocratic features of the 1980 Constitution (Borzutzky and Oppenheim, 2006: xvi). This was especially challenging as the military regime who had implemented this Constitution was still yielding power. Pinochet remained head of the army and after its retirement he took his place in the Senate as a senator for life. Furthermore, Pinochet and his rightwing supporters claimed political victory; they had saved the country from chaos and reformed the country politically and economically. This attitude of the Right gave power and legitimacy to the way the junta had directed the country (Oppenheim, 2007: 164, 214). Political Left and Right did not agree about the meaning of democracy. The Concertación¹⁶ saw the existing legal structures and other institutions as undemocratic, while the parties on the right side of the political spectrum stressed that Constitution and institutions created by Pinochet were indeed democratic (*ibid.*: 212).

For reasons named above the governments of the democratic transition acted pragmatically and cautious (Borzutzky and Oppenheim, 2006: xiii). Governability and the conservation of the democracy were seen as goals in itself and the government tried to reach consensus and agreement of its proposals by working with diverse segments of society (Oppenheim, 2007: 222-226). By no means did they want to return to the situation of political and social polarization of the pre-1973 period. The Concertación governments did their best to reach consensus and on many levels they succeeded. Gradually, the undemocratic features of the 1980 constitution were dismissed by the end of the Concertación government of Lagos in 2006 (*ibid.*: 8-9). In terms of economic policy, all the governments of the transition did not make any big changes to the economic strategy of neo-liberalism. Many programs to diminish the numbers of those living in poverty were created, but at the same time unequal income distribution caused by the economic system was accepted (Borzutzky and Oppenheim, 2006: xvii).

Despite their intention to reach consensus by all means, conflict still occurred. There was a high degree of disagreement regarding the issues dealing with the recent past and especially the human right violations committed by the military regime of Pinochet. One of the first measures president Aylwin undertook was the creation of a Truth Commission that would investigate the human right violations of the dictatorship (Baxter, 2005: 122; Stern, 2010: 29). Truth-finding was used as a way to reach national reconciliation. In the report, known as the Rettig Report after its president, the human right violations were presented as a truth that could not be denied and all Chileans should accept. The report emphasized that there could be different opinions on the causes of the coup on 11

¹⁶ Concertación is a political coalition formed of Left and Center parties, founded in 1988. From 1990 until 2010 Chile was governed by Presidents of this coalition.

September. The goal of this last comment was to let the polarized opinions about the coup exist mutually in a peaceful manner (Klep, 2012: 261). From both sides there was criticism on the report of the Rettig Commission. The military, the political rightwing and its supporters saw the commission as a way to put the military regime to trial, while they still believed that the crimes were justified because the country found itself in a state of war. The truth commission was not viewed as a way that would develop national reconciliation. For the military, the main purpose was to force the public opinion to believe that the army as an institution was responsible for the human right violations (Ardiles, Mesa and Urra, 2012: 265). On the other side there was criticism because people were not willing to only have truth and no justice (Stern, 2010: 66).

Truth-telling and justice are seen as ways to build a master narrative of the past (Klep, 2012: 260-261). As seen above, the new democratic government supported the memory framework of persecution and awakening. Hereby, the memory framework favored by the military regime, memory as a closed box, was dismissed. All though dismissed, parts of society still believed it was better to forget about the past. On the other side people wanted justice and remembered the coup as a cruel rupture.

As mentioned before, Chile remained divided about their past. During the entire transition period and until now these divided memories are brought to the surface by so-called 'memory knots'. One of the biggest of these 'memory knots' in recent history is the arrest of Augusto Pinochet in London in 1998. For months there was an outpour of memory through street protests and media attention (Stern, 2010: 226-227). After a period of indifference of both state and society towards memory, interest in the period was regained. In 1999 the state organized a so-called 'Dialogue Roundtable' (Mesa de Diálogo) to gain more information about those who disappeared on the hands of the military. The state wanted to review the past from the distinct divisions but at the same time recognize historical responsibilities (*ibid.*: 239). The arrest of Pinochet and his death eight years later also showed that he still had many supporters. Even though this group became smaller and smaller, many people still loved and respected Pinochet for what he had done for their country (Stern, 2010).

In this chapter I explored the ways Chile can be seen as a polarized society: polarized in two political ideologies. A political polarization that heightened in conflict during the presidency of Salvador Allende. This division between Left and Right has also been valid during the dictatorship and the democratic transition. This is apparent, among others, in the memory of the years of the UP, the coup and the following dictatorship. In this period the country also grew increasingly divided in terms of wealth. Due to the neoliberal approach of the economy, the gap between the richest and the poorest grew wider. All this created two Chile's that do not look at each other and do not know each other.

3. Left and Right: two visions on the past

Discussing the past and specifically of the thousand days of Allende's presidency in Chilean society, can give you the idea as if you are talking to people who lived in different countries. Some people will give you accounts of parties in the streets, fighting for their ideals and living in a more equal society. Other Chileans will tell you they cannot think of anything positive of this period. People living in the same country, in the same city but with completely different memories of the past. Juan,¹⁷ a successful business entrepreneur living in the suburbs of Las Condes,¹⁸ explained to me:

"I know that there are people who see it completely different than me, but I respect them. It is because they were in another story, they lived a different history so we both have a different look on things. We all have a reason for it, because we are from different histories, from different positions, families, everything".¹⁹

In this chapter I will take a closer look at these different histories. In Chilean society these different stories concern people viewing life from the political leftwing and from the political rightwing, they are so-called different 'mnemonic communities'. In the first chapter I have shown this idea of mnemonic memories of sociologist Zerubavel, in which he stresses that people have socio-biographical memory, meaning that our memory is influenced by our social environment and their conventions, ideologies and ideas (Zerubavel, 1996: 288-296). In this chapter I will show how people who regard themselves belonging to the Left or to the Right view their past and how the 'mnemonic community' they belong has influence on their memories.

In chapter 2 I have demonstrated how Chilean society became highly polarized in the 1970's. This polarization did not only create polarized and different memories of the past today, as we will see later on this chapter. It is also an aspect that is remembered vividly 40 years later. People from all parts of society gave me accounts of a society in which hate and anger towards the other group ruled. Adolfo²⁰, a university professor at the left-oriented university ARCIS in Santiago, 11 years at the time, remembered how divisions in society even regarded children:

"There was a program of Allende in which we received half a liter of milk at school. I remember that one of my classmates threw violently his carton of milk at the wall, saying that he didn't want it because it was from the UP. This shocked me, how could you throw food away, it was a gift".

Also younger people who did not experience the coup themselves have memories of polarization in society, told to them by parents and teachers. Pablo,²¹ a young militant of the socialist party, learned that "groups of the Left and the Right helped polarizing society. The polarization in Chilean society,

¹⁷ Juan Vierling, interview with the author, Santiago, 13/1/2014.

¹⁸ Las Condes is one of upperclass suburban neighborhoods of Santiago.

¹⁹ Translated from Spanish by the author. Following citations from interviews with the author are translated from Spanish to English by the author.

²⁰ Adolfo Castillo Díaz, interview with the author, Santiago, 4/12/2013.

²¹ Pablo José Varas, interview with the author, Santiago, 13/1/2014.

with an extreme Left and an extreme Right, generated disorder”. He stresses that polarization today is nothing like it was in those days, but that it is not totally absent: “I do believe that in Chile another polarization remains and that is regarding the dictatorship, the group that is in favor and the group that is against. I believe this still marks and polarizes society until today”. This division about the past that prevails today in Chile is explained by María,²² a young adult living in Las Condes:

“This country remains divided until this moment. Young people have formed their opinion, but based on the experiences of their parents, because of this we remain polarized. So many young people defend the human rights without understanding the other side. And people from the extreme Right also don’t understand the perspective of the other side”.

Before looking at the influence of those divisions today in the next chapter, I will first focus on the content of the different visions on the past. Regarding this I hypothesized that there exists an dichotomy in the experiences and memories of people belonging to the Left and to the Right, which fits to the idea of “different and contradictory interpretations of the same event” discussed in chapter 1 (Jelin, 2007: 146). I will focus on the dichotomy concerning the aspects of democracy and economy regarding the time of the Unidad Popular. In the following sections I will take a closer look at the content of the memories about these aspects 40 years after the coup based on interviews with people living in Santiago and other recent sources.

3.1 Left-Right dichotomy regarding the pre-1973 democracy

Democracy tends to be an emotionally charged word. For societies marked with a past of authoritarian regimes it may prove a higher goal. In Chile, the coup d’état on 11 September 1973 ended the democracy. Some parts of society stress that democracy had ended long before, it had already ended during the socialist government of the UP.

Sergio Romero Pizarro, former President of the senate and member of the rightwing party RN²³, describes the pre-1973 democratic issue as following: “Before 11 September 1973 there was an obvious disaffection for democracy as a political system and while some promoted the socialist revolution and others preferred a military solution, all of them refrained from the democratic formulas” (Larraín and Núñez, 2013: 96). This observation it shows how both Left and Right have different visions on the end of democracy, holding each other accountable for ending it. I hypothesized that the Right emphasizes that the leftwing was not interested in democracy in the long term, because of the road to socialism, while political Left underlines that the democracy was ended by the military coup.

²² María Jose Vizcaya, interview with the author, Santiago, 28/11/2013.

²³ RN is short for Renovación Nacional (literally National Renewal) is a center-right political party created during the 1988 plebiscite. Today they form a center-right coalition together with the conservative rightist party UDI, named ‘Alianza’.

Hugo,²⁴ a fervent supporter of the military coup responded irritated to statements of the coup ending democracy: “Imagine, it is incredible that they talk about the end of democracy after those years, but I believe that the democracy had already ended with the government of the UP”. They remember Allende’s road to socialism as a way to a socialist society, in their eyes an undemocratic society. In the words of Juan,²⁵ who has been a supporter of the political right wing his whole life:

“So you can talk of a democracy but the facts give clear signals that they wanted to have nothing to do with democracy, they wanted to destroy everything to build something new, that something new was communism”.

For the Right this reaction has everything to do with their memories of a government violating the national Constitution. In August 1973 the Chilean Chamber of Deputies declared that the government of Allende had been unconstitutional. They stressed that the government from the beginning had the intention to obtain absolute power to implement a totalitarian system (Büchi, 2008: 32-33). Hernán Büchi, former minister of Finance under the military regime, in his book about the economic transformation of Chile comments about the unconstitutional aspect of Allende’s government:

“The chaos ruled. Even though it is not the essence of this recital, it is necessary to emphasize that the chaos was not solely economical, but fundamentally social and political. In this way you can also see the socialist ideology and their intention of monopolizing the complete political power, even if this means not respecting the rule of law” (Büchi, 2008: 32).²⁶

The memory and experience of a society in complete chaos make that people from the right do not remember a democracy but instead chaos and violence. Juan,²⁷ one of my interviewees told me: “The climate of violence was very high, so if you ask me if it felt like a democracy, I say it felt like chaos”.

Alternatively on the Left, people in favor of Allende’s government, see this time as the most democratic in Chilean history. Generally, people I talked to that see themselves as being from the Left started talking about a euphoric time in which they were working on equality, social inclusion and participation. Take for instance Noémi,²⁸ militant of the youth department of the Communist party in the time of the Unidad Popular:

“For me the most striking was participating in a social process that was completely consistent with what I believed in, with the ideals of my life. [...] I believe it was like being on the side of the big dreams, dreams of more equality in healthcare, in education, for the working-class.”

²⁴ Hugo Pigliacampi, interview with the author, Santiago, 7/1/2014.

²⁵ Juan Manuel Freire, interview with the author, Santiago, 16/12/2013.

²⁶ Translation from Spanish by the author.

²⁷ See footnote 17.

²⁸ Noemí Baeza, interview with the author, Santiago, 22/11/2013.

People like Noémi tend to remember occasions in which for them a more equal society became visible. For example Josefina, in her twenties during the UP and active in the JAP,²⁹ remembers how also people of lower social classes could buy their groceries in the supermarkets for the first time and not only food but also other goods for their homes. Francisco,³⁰ who grew up in the popular neighborhood La Legua,³¹ remembers the atmosphere of social inclusion in his former neighborhood very well:

“The lives of the people from the more popular and working-class sectors, the poor sectors, changed because they felt part of something. They felt part of the government, something that had never happened before in the history of this country. They felt in power, part of the power. The participation during the Unidad Popular, I have never seen again”.

This feeling of social inclusion makes that people from the Left say that they remember the time of the UP as the most democratic time they have ever known. Mainly as in the eyes of those people democracy does not only mean going to the ballot box and electing someone to represent you. In their eyes it also means social inclusion (Moulian, 2009: 143).

In the next chapter I will show that the time of the UP still inspires people today and mainly because of the aforementioned social inclusion and participation during those days. Max³², a member of the organization Izquierda Autónoma,³³ explains that they remember Allende’s socialist project as a time in which they were redefining and broadening democracy in Chile: a popular democracy in which social classes could make their decisions. They remember Allende as a president that defended the interest of the majority of the population.

3.2 Left-right dichotomy concerning the economic performance under Allende

Nowadays, Chile is one of the most prosperous countries in Latin America. Under the rule of Pinochet the economy started to grow and flourish and many people are grateful towards Pinochet and his economic team for implementing the neoliberal system and saving their country economically. They use the word ‘saving’ because they see the economic performance under Allende in stark contrast compared to the economic performance under Pinochet. The economic crisis during the administration of Allende is a fact no one denies or argues about, but the causes of this economic

²⁹ Juntas de Abastecimientos y Precios (JAP, Committees of Supplies and Prices) was an governmental organization active during the last years of Allende’s government. This organization tried to alleviate chronic food shortages and suppress the upcoming black market.

³⁰ Francisco Narvaez, interview with the author, Santiago, 5/12/2013.

³¹ La Legua is one of the more poor neighborhoods of Santiago and used to be a strong base of support for the Unidad Popular.

³² Max Ferrer, interview with the author, Santiago, 6/1/2014.

³³ Izquierda autónoma (literally, Left Autonomous) is a leftist university movement from several Chilean universities. They have Marxists roots and they want to strengthen the politic autonomy of the subordinate classes in position to the political elite of the dominant classes.

crisis are a point of debate. I hypothesized that people nowadays remember the food shortage and the long lines they had to stand in to buy basic consumer goods, but that there is a dichotomy found in the reason why there was no food. People from the Left remember how the Right was accountable for the food shortages because they boycotted provisions and created a black market with the support of the United States. On the other hand the Right remembers how the Left mismanaged the economy and they blame them for the economic crisis. In this section I will show the different memories about the economic performance as viewed by the Right as well as the Left.

In his book about the economic performance of Chile, Hernán Büchi criticizes the economic model of socialism. In his eyes, socialism as an ideology is like a messianic belief that does not believe that producing more wealth is important, but solely how current wealth is divided (Büchi, 2008: 33). He explains that the production industry during Allende's years became increasingly controlled by the state, through nationalizations, expropriations and interventions. The level of protectionism for national production was extremely high. By 1972 the inflation rate of the country reached 508%, among others because of the distortions caused by the fixation of the prices of several consumer goods at extremely low levels. Within three years the amount of the external debt had increased by 23%. This all happened while the country was benefitting of the copper profits. Büchi explains that in his eyes this shows that for the socialists the idea of improving life for the popular sectors of society is only a façade for personal or group advantages (Büchi, 2008: 31-32).

The memories of the 'colas', the lines people had to stand in for hours to buy food are on top of people's minds. Just by mentioning that my research was about the memory of the Unidad Popular, made people tell stories about these 'colas'. For example the story of Juan,³⁴ a middle class boy of eleven year's old during those years and now a business entrepreneur living in one of the richer neighborhoods of Santiago:

"I mostly remember that there was lots of chaos and that there was a scarcity of food. I remember this because we had to, my family, we had to stand in line to buy something. For six, seven hours we were waiting for ... like... a chicken. They would give us coupons, something I had never seen before in our country. Chile is a country with lots of resources".

Those memories are also the things younger people remember, for these are the stories they heard from their parents and in their social environment. María,³⁵ daughter of a military officer started talking immediately about the issue of food shortage:

"Listen, before the dictatorship the economy was in very bad conditions, people did not have anything to eat, people were going out on the streets to ask for intervention of the army. There was no food, there were no supplies. So people had to stand in line for hours to buy food like sugar and milk; from all this you could only get very small amounts".

³⁴ See footnote 17.

³⁵ See footnote 22.

For many people of the Right, the chaos of the economic crisis and the shortages of food and consumer goods is one of the main memories of the pre-1973 period. For them this time feels as a psychological trauma (Silva, 1999: 172). On the other hand for left-wing sectors the economic aspect had not had such an impact and has not left such deep traces in their memories. It is not that they do not remember the difficulties of the food shortages, like Maria³⁶ who lost her husband in the repression of the military regime: “I had children, so of course I had my own difficulties with standing in line and stuff, but for us it was part of the road we had chosen, which was social inclusion”. For the leftwing sectors the memory of the opposition regarding the economic situation is far more important. The boycott implemented by the Right and the influence the United States had in this is the content of the stories told. Reminiscing about the time of Allende, Roberto,³⁷ who worked for the department of Agriculture during the Allende government, concludes the following:

“So concerning the time of the UP, of course it was a difficult time. In the period of Allende they continued with the agrarian progress of President Frei, the former president. But there was a huge conflict, because there was a lot of resistance from many sectors, which was all work from people of the Right. And the army started to conspire, and the influence of the United States.... something they seem to not talk about a lot”.

People like Roberto do not blame the Allende government for the food shortages. Neither does Noemí,³⁸ a militant of the communist youth department during Allende. She expressed emotionally:

“There was a boycott from the United States, executed by the Right. They were hiding products and there was a black market. So the impotence was not the fault of Allende, you could not blame the ones that were in power”.

Memories of fully stocked shops a few days after the coup prove the blame of the Right for the leftwing supporters. Josefina,³⁹ active in the JAP during the Allende administration remembers this vividly: “I believe the food shortage was caused by the Right. The day after the coup the stores were all of a sudden completely stocked”. Also for the younger people today the blame for the economic situation lies with the rightwing sectors and the United States. Pablo,⁴⁰ a member of the youth department of the socialist party marks:

“Obviously there was very high inflation, we cannot deny that. But there was a clear intervention of the United States and the conservative part of the Right that generated part of this inflation. Those groups tried to destabilize the government”.

Memories of the economic situation tend to focus mostly on the food shortages. On the one hand, for the rightwing sectors the memories of the food shortages and the (economic) disorder justifies

³⁶ Maria Horvitz, interview with the author, Santiago, 3/12/2013.

³⁷ Roberto Coll, interview with the author, Santiago, 22/11/2013.

³⁸ See footnote 28.

³⁹ Josefina Muñoz Valenzuela, interview with the author, Santiago, 26/11/2013.

⁴⁰ See footnote 21.

the intervention of the army. For them the memories of the day of the coup are memories of salvation and joy. Memories of some of my interviewees show that the memory framework of 'salvation of a society in ruins'⁴¹ is still accurate in contemporary Chile. Like Hugo,⁴² 13 years old at the time and son of a small merchandiser: "a feeling of happiness I believe, like liberalization. Yeah, I remember it as liberalization. A day of victory, like a solution for the situation we were living in". On the other hand, for leftwing sectors the memories of the economic situation tend to focus on the opposition, who they blame for the food shortages and their counteraction in the process of achieving a more equal society. They remember the day of the coup as "the deconstruction of dreams to create a better society, which we didn't achieve it yet, but we were on the way", according to the former Communist militant Noémi.⁴³

In the beginning of chapter 1 I have shown that several scholars stress the contemporary aspect of remembering.⁴⁴ This contemporary aspect is evident in the memories of democracy and the pre-1973 economic situation of leftwing and rightwing supporters. Individuals from the Left I spoke with remember a positive project. Their memories show that they attach great meaning to it as the socialist project of Allende fits their way of thinking about democracy. This also applies to the people from the Right. For them breaking the Constitution equals disrespect for democracy, which fits their idea of a democracy. For rightwing sectors the memories of the economic situation, such as the shortage of basic goods and the waiting in line for hours to buy food, form a greater part of their memories. These memories justify military intervention and more importantly they see the economic situation during the Allende government in stark contrast to the flourishing economy under Pinochet and in contemporary Chile. The core of their collective memories correspond to the ideologies of the groups they see themselves being part of, this being valid for both the 'mnemonic communities' of the Left and the Right. This way their memories give insight in their beliefs nowadays.

In this chapter we have seen that people, to a certain extent, still see Chilean society as a polarized one and that their memories indeed show a dichotomization. Ricardo Brodsky, director of Chile's memory museum,⁴⁵ writes in an essay about reconciliation that until today Chilean politics misses a shared memory which he sees as necessary to reach reconciliation (Larraín and Núñez, 2013: 112). In the following chapter I will investigate how the contradictory and polarized collective memories have influence in Chile today.

⁴¹ In chapter two I described these memory frameworks of historian Steve Stern.

⁴² See footnote 24.

⁴³ See footnote 28.

⁴⁴ I am referring to chapter 1.1 where the ideas about the contemporary aspect of remembering is shown according to ideas of Pierre Nora (1989), Jelin (2007) and Kaiser (2005).

⁴⁵ Museo de la memoria y de los derechos humanos (MMDH, Museum of Memory and Human Rights) located in Santiago since 2010.

4. Influence of the past in current affairs

Memories relate the past to the present. This is especially true for events of commemoration as I showed in the first chapter. In this chapter I will focus on examples in contemporary Chile that show the influence of the past, hereby focusing specifically on how the polarization of the past and the dichotomized memories created by this, is of influence today. In the first section I will focus on the different reactions towards memory of the UP. Secondly, the influence of commemoration dates in Chile today will be examined.

4.1 How the time of the Unidad Popular still inspires and terrifies

The government of Allende is seen as an inspiration today to some parts of society, while others are terrified by situations today that remind them of this government. In the preceding chapter I have shown how people from the left side tend to focus on the positive aspects they remember from these days for example the fight for social inclusion and equality. The right tends to remember the chaos and terrible economic situation they found themselves in. In this section I will show how these two different kinds of collective memory create two different reactions towards the past. In other words, how they relate memories of the past to the present.⁴⁶ For some inspiring and for others terrifying.

The iconic glasses of Allende can be seen everywhere these days in Chile: sprayed with graffiti on the walls of buildings, printed on t-shirts and postcards. They were exposed in the national history museum⁴⁷ in the months around the 40 year commemoration of the coup. The glasses represent a man who died as a martyr for democracy. Pier Nora speaks of a subjective flawed past still present nowadays when he talks about memory.⁴⁸ One could say that this cleaned image of Salvador Allende is a good example of the subjectivity that contains the memory of this man. For many leftist leaders the Chilean revolution of the 70's is a time to remember and honor, in order to avoid conflict they tend to remember Salvador Allende in a selective way: a martyr for democracy, but without the revolutionary and socialist goals he stood for. This image of Allende has been generally accepted in Chilean society (Winn, 2013: 143-144). "It is all political romanticism", marks Juan,⁴⁹ a successful business entrepreneur favorable of the Right, while talking about the memories the people from the Left have. "People do long for these days. Parents have told stories to their children and it is all

⁴⁶ I am referring to the contemporary aspect of remembering explained in chapter 1.1.

⁴⁷ Museo Histórico Nacional (Museum of National History) based in Santiago, Chile. The exposition of the glasses Allende wore during the bombing of the presidential palace on 11 September 1973 was part of the exposition 'Memoria y Registro 11.9.73' regarding the 40 year-commemoration.

⁴⁸ Section 1.1 shows the ideas of Pier Nora in a more elaborate way.

⁴⁹ See footnote 17.

folklore. Pretty stories about Victor Jara singing and that's the way people want it, they are simply idealizing".

Many people of the Right look at this revived image of the time of the Unidad Popular with distrust, like Juan Manuel⁵⁰ notes with irritation while sitting on the patio of his house in Las Condes: "It is a false inspiration, they don't know Allende. Allende was a lie, he was talking about democracy, but it was not democracy. It was communism". The rightwing sector of society has been pointing to the leftwing for idealizing the image of Allende. The rightist Luis Larraín⁵¹ points his finger towards the president of the leftist coalition Michel Bachelet in his column in *El Mercurio*, one of Chile's most prestigious newspapers, by saying that she could not resist to praise Allende, by which she "strengthened the myth that he was a great president, by focusing on his mysticism and estheticism she improved her electoral position"(Larraín, 2013).⁵² These statements show first of all how one side looks with distrust towards the idealized image of Allende and the time of his government, and secondly how the other side uses this image to fit their present needs. On this latter aspect will be focused on more into depth in the next section.

Whether based on a myth or a false image, for many young leftist leaders Allende and the socialist revolution of the 1970's serve as an inspiration. In 2011 and 2012 thousands of students went out on the streets to protest against the Chilean educational system. The discourse of the student leaders, many of them communist or autonomists,⁵³ showed that for them Allende's idea of democratic socialism and the empowerment of social movements during the UP form an inspiration and is the main example of the value of communist participation in the government (Winn, 2013: 148-150). Max,⁵⁴ member of the movement Izquierda Autónoma⁵⁵ explained to me:

"And we, as Izquierda Autónoma, we believe we have to, together with the other people of the Left, we have to stay loyal to those people that died and that were exiled, loyal to Allende's socialist project, so that we will rise again."

As said, not only the idea of democratic socialism inspires those young leaders, also the use of mass mobilization to express their protest and demands. The former leader of one of the student movements, Camila Vallejo, expressed this clearly:

"The people have the right to fight in mass the structural violence that exists in society. And we have never left the possibility of the armed way, always and when the conditions require it. Nevertheless, in

⁵⁰ See footnote 25.

⁵¹ Luis Larraín is the director of Instituto Libertad y Desarrollo (Institute of Liberty and Development) an institute about liberal ideology and close to the rightist conservative and liberal thinking. Larraín served as Minister of Planning and Cooperation (Ministro de Planificación y Cooperación) during the military regime.

⁵² Translation from Spanish by the author.

⁵³ See footnote 33.

⁵⁴ See footnote 32.

⁵⁵ See footnote 33.

this moment, this way is completely rejected, because the tension that exists today is neoliberalism against democracy” (Novoa, 2012: 79).⁵⁶

This quote is used by Jovino Novoa, member of the traditional rightists party UDI, to express his worries about the discourse these young communist leaders are having today and it reminds him of the Marxists ideas to justify violence. In his eyes the student movements show feelings of leftist nostalgia which allow them to throw rocks to show their point (Novoa, 2012: 79). Also some of the people I talked to, expressed their worries about the rise of communism they notice these days. “It worries me”, said Jaime Vizcaya,⁵⁷ a retired military officer, while discussing the student movements of the last couple of years in Chile: “The leaders of the student movements are so confrontational and intolerant. It reminds me of communism, because that’s the way communism works”. Most of those people do realize that the situation today is completely different to the situation of 40 years ago. At the same time the aspects of the past they see today do worry them because of their memories of the past. This corresponds to the idea of the perception of threat I talked about in the first chapter and how this perception keeps producing distrust for years and years (Silva, 1999: 175).

Some sectors of society look to the demands of the Left, and more specifically of the student movements with sadness and worries. “They want to change everything to the other side”, exclaimed Hector⁵⁸ a fervent supporter of the Right irritated. The demands of the student movements relate to the example of Allende because of the promotion of social movements, a democratic revolution, the mobilization of people, the fight for equality and education as a civil right (Winn, 2013: 149). In Peter Winn’s words:

“The student movement post Pinochet claim a repeal of the neoliberal counterrevolution of Pinochet and a return to social solidarity, participative democracy and public education of high quality and accessible for everyone like in the time of Allende” (Winn, 2013: 150).⁵⁹

People in Chile, specifically some parts of the Left, are searching for a different democracy. A democracy that is participative and that promotes social inclusion. As I have shown in the preceding chapter, many of my interviewees that regard themselves belonging to the Left have memories of the time of the Unidad Popular as the most democratic government in Chilean history. These memories fit their current ideas of democracy and their demands for change in the Chilean democracy. Earlier on in this chapter we saw that Camila Vallejo puts democracy as the opposite of neoliberalism, in their eyes the neoliberal model is perverse and it creates inequality (Novoa, 2012: 41). Roberto,⁶⁰ an economist who worked for the Ministry of Agriculture during Allende’s presidency

⁵⁶ Translated from Spanish by the author.

⁵⁷ Jaime Vizcaya Foradori, interview with the author, Santiago, 13/1/2014.

⁵⁸ Hector Ormeño, interview with the author, Santiago, 19/12/2013.

⁵⁹ Translation from Spanish by the author.

⁶⁰ See footnote 37.

affirms these thoughts about the neoliberal model: “There have always been people that believe they can solve everything with more work, more production. And this is not true; we have seen in the last twenty years that this is not the case. Not in Chile”. This does not match at all with Novoa’s interpretation of the current numbers of economic growth in Chile, in his eyes the Left keeps criticizing the neo-liberal model instead of trying to find a solution for social problems (*ibid.*: 26-41).

It is possible to say that on the two sides of the political spectrum people are in favor of very distinct economic and social models and that they point their finger to another, which creates an atmosphere of division. From statements of young leftist leaders it is possible to extract that this might exactly be what they are trying to create. For example the statement of Camila Vallejo about the consensus politics of the last twenty years:

“We reject the politics of consensus which has been developed in the past twenty years: this has generated politics behind closed doors, that only considers a minority, with a Concertación⁶¹ and a Right that represents anybody’s interest except of the citizens” (Novoa, 2012: 157).⁶²

It is the rightist politician Novoa who quotes Vallejo in his book and marks that it is not good that leaders speak in this manner, hereby not only referring to Vallejo but also to other leftist leaders, especially not with the experience of the 1970’s in mind (Novoa, 2012: 157-158). Nowadays, these rhetoric matters are adopted from within the government. In other words, the radicalization of language does no longer only occur on the streets but also within the parliament. Novoa notes that on the discursive level the Left is on the winning side, as a senator he hears the Marxist rhetoric some of his leftist colleagues use, concepts such as the struggle of the classes are often used within the parliament. Novoa blames the Left for not having learned anything from the past. Instead they “keep the divisions and hatred of the past alive, like they had no responsibility in what happened at the beginning of the 1970’s in Chile” (*ibid.*: 26).⁶³ A good example of the radicalization in language is found in the matter of the fiscal system. The newspaper *El Mercurio*, and the Right in general, is blamed for implementing a ‘*campaña del terror*’⁶⁴ (Peña, 2014). This word is used to describe the actions of the Right to spread hatred, division and fear during the time of the UP. By using this term the rightwing sector is compared with their actions in the beginning of the 1970’s and the word brings back memories of these days. Adolfo Castillo,⁶⁵ a political scientist at the University ARCIS in Santiago, explains this rhetoric matter in Chilean politics today. The political Left is searching for democracy, social and cultural inclusion, calling it a new social project. However, all is linked to the past. The concepts and words they use are the same, just as the people who sit in government now

⁶¹ See footnote 16.

⁶² Translation from Spanish by the author.

⁶³ Translation from Spanish by the author.

⁶⁴ In English: campaign of terror.

⁶⁵ See footnote 20.

are the same as the people who sat in government during the beginning of the 1970's. Conversely, you also have the political Right talking about socialism, but they link it with disorder and as a result are creating fear. These rhetoric issues show how the divisions of the past are to a certain degree still accurate and how polarized memories keep this division alive.

4.2 Left and right using commemoration to present their visions on the past

Forty years after the coup d'état this period of history has not been forgotten in Chile. The entire year from January to September 2013 has been about the 40th anniversary of the coup. Television channels have been broadcasting interviews with victims of the dictatorship, military officers and politicians. Human right groups have used the commemoration to, once again, bring the human right violations committed by the military junta under attention of the public. Demands for further installation of justice could be found all over Chile. 'Chile: imágenes prohibidas'⁶⁶ a miniseries with images of the dictatorship that had never been broadcasted before on Chilean television had thousands of viewers and was talked about extensively in the media. People from both sides of the political spectrum offered a mea culpa. For example Hernán Larraín, a senator from the conservative rightist party UDI, apologized for his responsibility in the coup and "for refraining from what he should have done" (Cea, 2013).⁶⁷ On the other side of the political spectrum, the socialist Camilo Escalona asked for forgiveness for his contribution in polarizing the nation in the years before the coup (*ibid.*). In the words of historian Steve Stern, the 40 year commemoration can be labeled as one big 'memory knot' (Stern, 2006: 1).

This 'memory knot' was not limited to the commemoration date itself, but was present for many months. Noémi,⁶⁸ a former exile who has been participating in the commemoration act in the national stadium for about twenty years was surprised by the number of people that were present this year on the day itself:

"Normally there would be like forty people at its most and we would know all of them, but this year it was massive. It was impressive to see so many young people there. There were so many new people, it was wonderful".

Many people I talked to were surprised about the degree of attention the 40 year commemoration received. For them it felt so much bigger than ever before, even when compared to the 30 year commemoration a decennia before. Like Pablo,⁶⁹ a youth member of the socialist party, described:

⁶⁶ In English: 'Chile: forbidden images'

⁶⁷ Translation from Spanish by the author.

⁶⁸ See footnote 28.

⁶⁹ See footnote 21.

“The 40 year commemoration maybe had a special mysticism about it, because of being forty years after. A mysticism that gave it great importance. It’s been years that I saw so many people marching as in the march for the 40 year commemoration. Also in other activities there were so many people, for example in the national stadium. It was packed. So I believe that in Chile we are truly making progress in recognizing and accepting this part of our history”.

For Stern ‘memory knots’⁷⁰ are, among others, dates on the annual calendar that demand attention. As I have shown in the first chapter, one of the aspects of these dates is they many times stir up polemics about memory (Stern, 2006: 1). This is for example visible in the reactions towards the broadcasting of the miniseries ‘Chile: imágenes prohibidas’. The broadcaster received many complaints about the series, saying that it promoted hatred and division. Furthermore, the series were criticized for showing “a prejudiced vision on the past with a strong emphasis on the figure of Allende and with political and electoral intentions” (Reyes, 2013).⁷¹ Later on in this section I will take a closer look on the use of the 40 year commemoration for electoral purposes, but also important to distract from this comment is the political aspect in general. For scholar Alexander Wilde those commemoration dates, in his words ‘irruptions of memory’⁷² involve authority on the political and institutional level. For governments, and politicians in general, these dates are ways to construct a political identity, as seen in chapter 1.⁷³

The construction of identity through political acts and conflictive element of commemoration became very clear in the political 40 year commemoration ceremonies. The sitting government, presided by RN⁷⁴ member Sebastian Piñera, was a government formed by the political rightwing. Piñera’s government organized a commemoration ceremony at the Presidential Palace, for which he also invited the president of the oppositional coalition, Michel Bachelet. Bachelet turned down the invitation because her coalition, Nueva Mayoría,⁷⁵ was organizing their own commemoration event in the national memory museum, which created an intense controversy in the Chilean politics (Concha and Duran, 2013). The spokeswoman of former President Piñera, Cecilia Pérez, regrets that again it becomes clear that it is the political class that has not found reconciliation (*La Tercera*, 2013a). Andres Chadwick, at that time Minister of the Interior, criticized the leftist opposition for their absence in the official commemoration ceremony. He expressed that they have lost an opportunity to stand together in an atmosphere of never again, wondering why instead they keep marking a division (*La Tercera*, 2013b). By listening to Piñera’s speech it becomes clear that the right

⁷⁰ More detailed explanation of Steve Stern’s theory of ‘memory knots’ can be found in chapter 1.3

⁷¹ Translation from Spanish by the author.

⁷² More detailed explanation of Alexander Wilde’s theory of ‘irruptions of memory’ can be found in chapter 1.3

⁷³ Historian Anne Ollila argues that commemoration dates are political acts to construct identity; see chapter 1.3

⁷⁴ See footnote 23.

⁷⁵ Nueva Mayoría (New Majority), is a leftist political coalition created in 2013 and formed by almost all center-left parties. This coalition is the successor of the ‘Concertación’, but now also includes the Communist Party (PC).

wanted to impose a united political class that looks to the future, not forgetting or justifying the past but by overcoming the traumas of the past (*La Tercera*, 2013c).

Many Chileans I talked to do not see the political rightists and leftist parties commemorating together, at least not for some time. They do not see it as impossible but, in their eyes, more generations will have to pass before a joint commemoration will happen. “I believe it would be possible but not with the politicians we have today” said Camila,⁷⁶ a sociology student, with irritation in her voice. Roberto,⁷⁷ who went into exile during the dictatorship, blames the attitude of the rightist politicians for this:

“It would be wonderful, but I think it will be difficult because of the opposition, because of the arrogance of the Right, of the fascist groups. I hope I will be mistaken. I hope that they will speak, so we can have truth and justice and afterwards we can reconcile”.

The reactions of my interviewees show quite clearly the element of conflict that entails commemoration and memory in general. Different visions on the past and different visions on the future make it difficult to commemorate this painful period in their history. Max,⁷⁸ a member of Izquierda Autónoma,⁷⁹ explained to me:

“A Left that is committed to a socialist project of the 21th century, and a Right that wants to continue with neo-liberalism. They are total opposites. And in this way, I don’t think that we could come to a convergence where we can all commemorate the coup together.”

Leaving the reason for the two ceremonies aside for a moment, it is possible to say that it turned the commemoration date of 11 September into a ‘mnemonic battle’. While certain parts of the Left blame the Right for being arrogant and not willing to find justice, and the other way around, the Right that blames the Left for being unwilling to reconcile. The 40 year commemoration became even more complex as it coincided with the electoral year. On 17 November the first round of the presidential elections took place, meaning that the commemoration of the coup took place in the middle of the presidential campaigns. This coincidence gave a clear advantage for the Left coalition, who is seen as being on the right side of the political past. Political scientist Alfredo Joignant⁸⁰ explains this advantage as following:

“Images, yes, images that have to do with two daughters of generals that are competing in this election. It is like film script or a novel and the result of the elections is predictable, because in the same year as the 40 year commemoration there is no possibility of competing, there is no competition at all.”

⁷⁶ Camila Silva, interview with the author, Santiago, 10/1/2014.

⁷⁷ See footnote 33.

⁷⁸ See footnote 32.

⁷⁹ See footnote 36.

⁸⁰ Alfredo Joignant, interview with the author, Santiago, 27/11/2013.

Besides it being the 40 year commemoration, the Left had another advantage in the presidential elections. Both the candidates of the Left and Right coalition are daughters of military generals. Michel Bachelet, candidate of the leftist coalition Nueva Mayoría, is daughter of Alberto Bachelet, an air-force general who had been a supporter of Allende from 1958 on. Alberto Bachelet was imprisoned by the military junta, tortured and died in the air-force detention center. Michel Bachelet and her mother were imprisoned and tortured as well. After their release they went into exile in East-Germany. Bachelet had been active in the youth department of the socialist party during the Unidad Popular and stayed politically active in Germany fighting the military junta from abroad (Castillo and Montes, 2013). Evelyn Matthei was the candidate of the rightist coalition Alianza. Her father was in charge of the Air Force Academy at the time of the coup and later on became the head of the air-force and took place in the military junta. Matthei became politically active after the 1988 plebiscite and had voted in favor of Pinochet during the plebiscite. Both Bachelet's and Matthei's histories represent a different side of the same coin. Bachelet as a political victim, representing the side that is fighting for justice and has memory on her side. Matthei representing the conservative part of the political Right, the part of society that has been seen as loyal to Pinochet. Whether or not these representations are completely correct is a matter of lesser importance, considering that those images do influence the electorate. Evelyn Matthei explains their pasts the following way:

“Our greatest difference is to have lived the past from distinct sides. With both very strong experiences. For her, her father imprisoned and dead, and for me, my father who later on served in the military Junta. I remember her father affectionately: for me he is a symbol of how it shouldn't be. He and his family paid, in a horrible way, for the irresponsibility of lots of people who brought us the rupture of this country” (Castillo and Montes, 2013: 23).⁸¹

These words show that Matthei and the political Right in general have been trying to step away from the image of being loyal to Pinochet and especially the human right violations that his regime entailed. Earlier on in this section we have seen that it is the Left that has been blamed for maintaining the division between the political Left and Right. Another accusation that has been directed to the Left is the way they seemed to have used the 40 year commemoration to advance their presidential campaign. Francisco,⁸² a law student who identifies with the Left, marked:

“I believe the commemoration was only political, they (Left and Right) used it since there are also presidential elections this year[.....] Bachelet and Matthei are both daughters of generals. One of the side of the Right, one of the more socialist side. They (Left) used it like propaganda”.

⁸¹ Translation from Spanish by the author.

⁸² Francisco José Narváez Gallo, interview with the author, Santiago, 29/11/2013.

Politically, the statement of using the commemoration for electoral purposes has, for example, been marked by Andres Chadwick. In an interview with a Chilean television canal he remarked regarding the absence in the commemoration of the Left coalition:

“For sure there are people that try to get political benefits, and maybe this reflects not having the capacity to look beyond and with more unity today. Leaving aside the electoral, narrow-minded and partisan aspect” (*La Tercera*, 2013b).⁸³

It is to say that the 40 year commemoration and the aspect of the running candidates both daughters of generals have been used by the Left to construct their political identity in a way that gave them electoral advantage. These accusations may give the feeling that it is solely the Left doing this. Pinochet used the 11 September commemoration to justify his military rule, reminding the nation of the chaos the country found itself in before. Today this commemoration is more about the memories of repression of the dictatorship and honoring the victims, so it shifted to the memory favorable of the Left.

There are other occasions in which the memory is presented more favorable of the Right and in these moments it is this side of the political spectrum that directs attention to these dates. This, for example, becomes very clear in the commemoration of rightist senator Jaime Guzmán. He was an important political figure of the Right, a former adviser to Pinochet and was assassinated in April 1991, at the beginning of the transition period (Oppenheim, 2007: 224). In the first chapter I have shown how, among others, scholars Jelin and Zerubavel stress that the debate around commemoration is about whether or not a date should be remembered and if so, what should be remembered. The commemoration of the death of Jaime Guzmán is a typical example of this. Every year his death is commemorated by a minute of silence in the lower house of parliament. This year Camila Vallejo, communist member of the parliament, remained seated during the minute of silence. “You can’t ask me to honor a person that I believe was harmful to the democracy of our country”, Vallejo reacted (Campos, 2014).⁸⁴ The Right was appalled by this attitude of not honoring a congressman that was assassinated in democratic times (Belén, 2014) and two deputies of the political party UDI filed an complain with the commission of ethics (Mascareña, 2014). This example shows clearly that commemoration may entail conflict. In the eyes of Vallejo there should not be a commemoration in honor of Guzmán, while for the political Right this commemoration date is important given he was a victim of their side.

In this chapter I have shown several examples of how the past and specifically memories of the past still have influence in Chilean society today. That this period of time serves as an inspiration becomes clear in the reactions of young leftist leaders. This inspiration can be seen as subjective, as

⁸³ Translation from Spanish by the author.

⁸⁴ Translation from Spanish by the author.

for example in the use of Allende's glasses as a symbol for the Chilean socialist revolution. Others are terrified by the elements of the UP they see returning in the demands of the student movements, the revival of communism and the demands for a different democracy. It might be said that nowadays the atmosphere of division and radicalization in Chile seems to be growing stronger. This is visible in the language referring to the beginning of the 1970's that is used more and more in Chile today. The 40 year commemoration also shows division and conflict between the memories of the Left and Right. This commemoration and others are used to construct political identity and to the advantage of the left- or rightwing, for example seen in the presidential campaign of 2013. In other words, the memories are used to fit their present needs.

Conclusion

The way a nation remembers the traumas of their past is a topic that has fascinated me for a long time. In the case of Chile's coup d'état on 11 September 1973 it is not possible to denominate one particular trauma that is experienced by the entire Chilean population. Some people are traumatized by the time preceding the coup —the socialist government of Salvador Allende— in their eyes a time of social and economic chaos. Other people experienced this time as euphoric, a time in which they were fighting for a more equal society. For the latter the trauma came after the military coup with the repression that the military regime of Augusto Pinochet entailed. In the beginning of the 1970's Chile grew highly polarized with a Left and a Right that became complete opposites, both on the political level as well as in society. The polarization made that the military coup was experienced in completely different ways. For some a relief, a solution to the societal problems. For others as the end of democracy and their political dream of equality.

In chapter 2 I have shown that the polarization created in the beginning of the 1970' was maintained on several levels during the 17 years of dictatorship. First of all in the memory of the coup and the preceding years. Secondly, in the claim to find justice for the human right violations committed and the wish to close this time of military repression, which is seen as unwished-for but necessary by many. Chilean society also became more divided in terms of wealth as some parts of society prospered from the economic approach of the military government while others sectors of society can be seen as the poor victims of this approach. Lastly, in the division seen in the 1988 plebiscite in which a little bit more than half of the voters wanted to return back to democracy, there was still a significant part of society that stayed loyal to their president general Pinochet. These divisions kept coming to the surface during the entire period of transition back to democracy, due to the oppositional memories and experiences of the time before the coup and after the coup.

The polarization of the past is still visible in the memories of the Chileans nowadays, as I have shown in chapter 3. People I spoke to remembered to a certain degree of what is expected when looking at the 'mnemonic community' they belong to. In other words, they remember according to the conventions and ideologies of their social environment. Regarding democracy people who identify themselves with the political leftwing remember a project of social equality and righteousness. It was the most democratic government in Chilean history because of the high degree of social participation and inclusion. In their eyes, it was the military dictatorship that ended this democracy. People from the Right see it and remember it completely different. Their memories constitute of a chaotic society in which the rules of democracy were violated and due to a government that was trying to implement a socialist society. In other words, in their eyes democracy had already ended pre-1973. The dichotomy regarding the memories of the economic situation is

found in who is to blame for the economic chaos. People identifying themselves with the political rightwing tend to blame the socialist government for poorly governing the economy, while the other side blames the Right for deepening the economic crisis by implementing a boycott of food.

More important for the relevance of this work is the impact that certain memories have in people's minds today, taking in mind the contemporary aspect of memory shown in the first chapter. Here several scholars stress that memories give insight in how people think today and how they give meaning to their past.⁸⁵ For leftwing supporters the economic situation does not form the biggest part of their memory, for them the memory of a euphoric time of implementing a socialist project is far more important. On the other side for the rightwing most of their memories of this time period constitute of standing in line for hours to buy food, as well as the economic and social disorder in general. For both groups, memories correspond to the political ideology they identify themselves with. Furthermore, this also explains the different and contradictory interpretations of the past, as stressed by Elizabeth Jelin in chapter 1.

In the work of Steve Stern we have seen that different experiences lead to equally different memories. The memories of the coup d'état tend to be a 180 degrees opposite to one another, which is not surprising given the high degree of polarization the Chilean society found themselves in. These polarized memories are still of influence today as I stressed in chapter 4. For some people this influence is seen in the inspiration Salvador Allende and his socialist project forms. Young leftist leaders look at this period of time as the main example of building a more equal and fair society. They honor the socialist and communist militants who fought for this. On the other side of society the revived interest in the Unidad Popular is viewed with distrust. Leftwing sectors are blamed for idolizing the figure of Allende. Especially the demands of the student protests that have been occurring since 2011 on remind people of the time of the Unidad Popular. Another aspect that brings the memories of the days of the Unidad Popular to the surface is a rhetoric matter you see occurring in Chile at the moment. The Left for example is radicalizing their language, for instance by blaming the rightwing sectors of implementing a 'campaña del terror'. Terms like this remind people of the period pre-1973. Among others, due to this radicalization in language the divisions between Left and Right are heightened again.

Another aspect in which conflict has been visible is the actual 40year commemoration of the coup that took place in September 2013. In short, Left and Right each had their own separate commemoration ceremony and people do not see it happening yet that the two political sides will be able to commemorate this painful period of their history together. In the first chapter I have shown the argument of scholar Anne Ollila that commemoration and the presented memories are politically

⁸⁵ See chapter 1.1, where the contemporary aspect of memories is stressed by scholars like Jelin (2007), Nora (1989) and Ollila (1999).

used in the construction of identity. This aspect of commemorating can be seen as very important by the 40th anniversary of the coup as it coincided with the presidential campaign. Especially the political leftwing has been reproached for using the 40 year commemoration to their electoral advantage. First of all, by organizing their own commemoration ceremony. Secondly, by feeding the image of the two running candidates both being daughters of military generals and presenting this as the good and the bad side of the past.

There are also other commemoration dates to which the political rightwing is more attentive as the memories are working in their advantage. For example in the commemoration of the assassinated rightwing senator Jaime Guzmán. The commemoration of this event in April 2014 stirred up the polemics about memory given the act of Vallejo —a communist member of parliament— who remained seated during the minute of silence.

The dichotomization in the memories of the people identifying themselves with the Left and the Right, and the examples of conflictive memory in current affairs bring me to the conclusion that polarization in Chile still exists. First of all regarding the memories of the past, but also in respect to the political left- and rightwing in contemporary Chile. Although definitely to a lesser degree as back in the 1970's, current affairs do suggest that the Left and Right are driving further apart again. With the onset of Michel Bachelet's second government at the beginning of 2014 this division is becoming more and more visible. I anticipate that political Chile will continue to follow this road, even though to this I can only hint, as further research and the passing of time is needed. Though, I can conclude that in Chile the Left and the Right have not yet come to a shared collective memory of the coup d'état on 11 September 1973 and the preceding years of the Allende government.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

For my interviews I used the semi-structural method. My interviews were directed at 2 central topics: memory of the time of the Unidad Popular and the influence of that time period nowadays. I organized my interviews around 5 target groups: witnessing generation political leftwing, witnessing generation political rightwing, non-witnessing generation political leftwing, non-witnessing generation political rightwing and experts. All my interviews were in Spanish, this the questions asked are included below in Spanish. The questions asked and the formulations of the questions depended on the age of the interviewee.

Regarding the memory of the Unidad Popular

- Qué cosas memoras/ves del tiempo de Unidad Popular como positivas? Y cuales como negativos?
- De qué manera difiere las memorias negativas y positivas entre la derecha y la izquierda?
- Cuales son las memorias más marcantes, que siempre lo recordará, del tiempo de Unidad Popular? Qué eventos?
- Hay eventos específicos del tiempo de Unidad Popular sobre los cuales has oído?
- Cómo recuerdas, con cual sentimiento, 11 septiembre 1973, el día del golpe?

Regarding the influence of the Unidad Popular in contemporary Chile

- Has visto las emisiones del series 'los 1000 días' y 'Chile, las imágenes prohibidas? Estas imágenes han cambiado tus ideas de la situación alrededor del golpe de estado?
- En las elecciones pasadas jugaron las ideas y opiniones de Allende, el golpe y el régimen militar del Pinochet un papel? En su propia elección? En general?
- Que significación tenía la conmemoración de cuarenta años después del golpe en tu vida? Piensas y hablas más sobre el pasado durante el tiempo alrededor de la conmemoración?
- En 11 septiembre este año tuvieron lugar dos ceremonias de conmemoración. Una en La Monada organizado por el gobierno y otra en el Museo de la Memoria, organizado por la Nueva Mayoría. Qué es tu opinión sobre los dos actos diferentes de conmemoración? Sería posible en el futuro de tener una ceremonia con todos los partidos políticos?