



**Motherhood and Masculinity in Women's Political
Protest: Anti-Allende Women Movement in Chile
between 1964 and 1973**

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Preface

I would like to express my immense gratitude to professor Margaret Power from the University of Illinois, Chicago, whose book “Right-wing women in Chile” inspired me to focus on the case of Chilean women in the 60s and 70s, and who shared with me the interviews she conducted for this book, which I used for my own research for this Bachelor Thesis. I would like to also thank to my supervisor professor Patricio Silva, for our fruitful discussions that helped me to find a good way in approaching this topic, and for his comprehensive feedback through out the whole writing process. Further I would like to thank to Gabriela Correa, a journalist from Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio*, who provided me with samples of newspaper articles for my analysis. And last but not least, I would like to thank to my mother for her unconditional love and support through out my whole studies.

Introduction

On 11 September 1973 the Chilean armed forces ousted the democratically elected government of the Unidad Popular led by President Salvador Allende and took over the control of the country. This event, followed by the torture and executions of many Chilean citizens, caused profound political, sociological and economical changes in Chile and left the country under strict military rule for seventeen years. To today, the coup d'état has been a key topic of study and discussion amongst scholars and laymen, revolving constantly around the role of the US and its Central Intelligence Agency, or of the rightwing conservative parties. However, very few people talk about the crucial contribution of Chilean Anti-Allende women's movements to this event, despite their important role in constant undermining Allende's position and provoking of the military to take an action against his government. This thesis will analyze how the Anti-Allende women's movement evolved from its early stage during the presidential election in 1964 until the military coup in 1973 and shall deliberate on the role of the concepts of motherhood and masculinity in this movement. The research question which this thesis will answer is: 'What role did the practices of motherhood and masculinity play in the anti-Allende's women protests in Chile between 1964 and 1973?' As the question indicates, the theoretical framework, which begins this thesis, will be constructed using the concepts of motherhood and masculinity, paying particular attention to how these notions determined the nature of the political protests.

The theoretical chapter is followed by three thematic chapters. The analysis carried out through these chapters is partly based on interviews with members of anti-Allende women movement and other actors of the political life in the period. These interviews were provided to me by professor Margaret Power, from University of Illinois, who conducted an extensive research of Anti-Allende women movement in the 1990s. The chapters are organized chronologically, with each chapter covering different period of time, particularly focusing on a

single most important event of the time. These are namely the so-called *Scare Campaign*¹ in the 1964, *The March of Empty Pot* in the 1971 and the pre-coup protests in the 1973. The case study of Anti-Allende women protests constitutes a unique example of female mobilization. They articulated their demands on the basis of their maternal identity, while not calling for greater emancipation and enlargement of their citizen rights as women. This case study aims to prove that women facing a threat to their family and their position within the family, caused by mismanagement by the government (in the political, economic or social domains) will likely form an opposition to this threat on the basis of their universal maternal identity, irrespective of their class or partisan affiliation. The main argument of this thesis is that the notion of motherhood constituted the most important essence under which the Anti-Allende women formulated their struggle. They saw Communism and its ideological and economic impacts as an immense threat to the livelihood of their children and their own maternal role. The first empirical chapter will discuss the period prior to the 1964 presidential election. It will firstly highlight the role of the media and other means (such as pamphlets and posters) in the propaganda against Allende and a spread of a fear of communism amongst the Chilean women, in order to influence the election. This chapter will demonstrate how the idea of threat of motherhood was in one hand imposed on women by external actors. It also suggests, that women in this early stage started to perceive this threat and institutionalize into organizations such as the Women's Action of Chile (*Acción mujeres de Chile*). This organization then played a pivotal role in further struggle.

The following chapter will look at the case of the so-called 'March of Empty Pots and Pans', which took place in 1971 as a protest against the governmental policies and the scarcity of food and other consumer stuffs in the country. This chapter will provide evidence of concrete

¹ In Spanish was this campaign termed as *La Campaña de Terror*. In Academic articles written in English are used both terms 'The Scare Campaign' and 'The Fear Campaign' to refer to this campaign. This essay will use to the English translation 'The Scare Campaign'.

economic, social and political conditions that impacted a woman's life and thus triggered an active mobilization of women, which led to the March.

The last chapter is organized around the main political events of 1973, the year of the coup d'état. It argues that women faced with widespread shortages of basic foodstuffs placed them in a desperate situation, which fueled their desire to overthrow Allende. The worsening of their overall situation and growing fear motivated women into taking more aggressive actions. Hence, they contested and questioned masculinity as a strategic tool in order to provoke their male counterparts into action. Whereas the maternal identity played a role along the whole examined period (1964-1973), the contestation of masculinity could be seen especially in two moments: around the March of empty pots and pans and most importantly in the period June-August 1973 shortly before the military coup took place.

I applied qualitative analytical approach for studying this case study with large focus on primary sources such as interviews, newspaper articles and slogans, yet largely relied on research that was carried out by other scholars and the secondary literature that was produced on the topic.

CHAPTER 1 Motherhood and Masculinity: Theoretical Framework

As the research question indicates, the theoretical framework of this thesis will be based around two concepts; *motherhood* and *masculinity*. The concept of motherhood will be first introduced in more general terms within the Latin American realm; it demonstrates the importance of another concept, *marianismo*, and its essentiality for the development of a traditional notion like Motherhood in Latin America. Furthermore, Motherhood's utilization as a main component for political identity shall be examined. In order to do so, the focus will be placed on a concept of *Militant motherhood*, coined by Alvarez, which is based on the *Practical and Strategic Gender interests* concept as provided by Molyneux. Together, this group of concepts will provide a workable basis for thoroughly understanding the concept of Motherhood in the case study of Anti-Allende women protests. The last part of the theoretical framework will be dedicated to the concept of masculinity within the Latin American realm.

1.1 Motherhood in Latin American Realm

Mothers and the maternal role had been an essential part of the Latin American world since the colonial times. It still plays an important role in the modern Latin America, however each country varies in its perception of maternal roles due to cultural and demographic differences (O'Connor, 2014: 6). For instance mothers in Cuba are perceived differently within their country's society than mothers in Argentina. In order to understand the traditional notion of motherhood in Latin America, it is firstly necessary to look at *Marianismo*. As Chant and Craske point out the concept of *Marianismo* is considered a complementary to the concept of *Machismo*, however it has been given much less attention in the scholarly analysis than the latter one. This notion was brought to the 'New World' from Europe and was reinforced by the Catholic Church. The institution of the Catholic Church was essential for the construction of Motherhood in connection with notions of 'fertility', 'domesticity' and 'self-sacrifice', which go together with *marianismo*. *Marianismo* is

based on the assumption of an idealized picture of woman, which is morally and spiritually superior to men (Chant and Craske, 2003: 9-10). Stevens (1973) notes that “[..] spiritual strength [typical for *marianismo*] engenders abnegation, that is an infinite capacity for humility and sacrifice. No self-denial is too great for the Latin American woman; no limit can be divined to her vast store of patience with the men of her world” (1973: 94). Stevens demonstrates that woman’s dedication to men as well as to her family is the key in the concept of *marianismo*. Furthermore, women’s power rests in their ability to give birth to a new life, which is in the frame of *marianismo* seen, as conforming Gods will and highlighting their divine uniqueness (Chant and Craske, 2003: 10). This explains how the mothers were seen in the conservative sphere of mid-20th century Latin America. It further emphasizes their place within the privacy of their home, taking care of the children and the family, which was their unique divine function. O’Connor confirms this view and states that motherhood is central in the notion of *marianismo*, which implies that women’s identity is only maternal in nature and is solely devoted to pursuing the needs of her husband and children (2014: 9). This is confirmed by Power, who says that Chilean women in the 1960s and 70s deemed their gender identity in harmony with the maternal one (Power, 2002: 5). In other words, they considered being a woman inevitably linked with being a mother. Therefore they saw their gender identity in the purest traditional essentialist terms (Power, 2002: 11). As said before, a woman’s place, according to the essentialist approach, is at home, which highlights the dichotomy between private and public. This dichotomy is also crucial for studying motherhood as political identity.

1.2 Motherhood as a Political Identity

Since the 1960s numerous movements of women emerged, basing their protests on their maternal identity. In Latin America, this politicization of motherhood is connected mainly with the struggle against oppressive military regimes, which took place in most of the countries of the region.

Numerous researchers tried to conceptualize these protests and that is when Sonia E. Alvarez coined the concept of *militant motherhood*, while studying women's protests against the military dictatorship in Brazil. Militant motherhood arose as an answer to structural changes in Brazilian society, caused by the policies carried out by the military junta, which led to deterioration of standards of living of popular sectors (Alvarez, 1990: 50). Women therefore organized protests in order to express their discontent about impossibility to fulfill their prescribed maternal roles. She further acknowledges that 'empty pot and pans' are considered as a classical symbol of militant motherhood, which are according to her directly linked to maternal identity and can serve as a tactical tool in a protest (Alvarez, 1990: 99). Alvarez based her concept on a theoretical approach developed by Maxine Molyneux in her study of popular class women in Nicaragua. Molyneux (1984) evolved her work around women's interests. Molyneux claims that even though women's interest may differ by the position of woman in certain social divisions (e.g. class, ethnicity etc.), there are particular interests that are shared by women on the basis of their gender. These interests can, in some cases, unite women across classes. She further makes an important division between so-called *strategic gender interests* and *practical gender interest*. This division is crucial as it distinguishes between feminist and feminine protest. Gender interests in general are, according to Molyneux, enrooted in the character of women's (as well as men's) social position through their gender. However, each strategic and practical gender interests evolve around different women's needs and have different implications based on these needs (Molyneux, 1984: 231-232).

The first one, "[s]trategic gender interest are derived deductively, that is, from the analysis of women's subordination and from the formulation of alternative, more satisfactory set of arrangements to those which exist. (Molyneux, 1984: 232)" These are strategic objectives that are attempting to change women's position in the society and challenge their subordination to men especially on institutional level. It involves tackling issues e.g. changing sexual division of labor, greater equality in fields such as education, politics etc., mitigation of an onus of taking care of the

home and children and many others. Molyneux sees the struggle based on overcoming these issues as a purely feminist one (Molyneux, 1984: 233). From the focal point of the dichotomy between private and public, the women are motivated by their strategic gender interest in trying to leave their private sphere in order to become more equal participant in the public sphere.

On the other hand, “[p]ractical gender interests are given inductively and arise from the concrete conditions of women’s position within the gender division of labor” (Molyneux, 1984: 233). Practical gender interests constitute reaction to ‘immediate perceived need’ of women (Molyneux, 1984: 233). It derives from women’s desired placement in the private sphere of their homes and their interest in running it well. Molyneux further claims that women tend to mobilize on the basis of these practical gender interests if the government prevents them from fulfilling their prescribed role such as their maternal role (Molyneux, 1984: 233). This could be for instance caused by implementation of economic policies that will lead to food shortages, or educational reforms that will have an impact on their children etc. Unlike the women concerned with the strategic gender interest, these women are not trying to challenge their position within the labor division as they see their primary function at home in the private domestic sphere. However they would like to secure this position within the labor division and will mobilize and form a protest if they face conditions that they perceive as a threat to their home and children and that undermine their ability of being a good housewives and mothers (Molyneux, 1984: 233). Both, the *practical gender interest* and *militant motherhood* imply that the class backgrounds are important and that these are therefore more applicable to the poor and working class women. The reason behind is that these women will be more likely to suffer when harsh economic conditions take place in the country. However I argue that this does not imply that the middle and upper class women were not impacted by worsening economic conditions.

Moreover, these two concepts do not only take into consideration the economic circumstances, but the overall situation that was influenced by politically motivated policies or

educational and social reforms, which had an impact on a whole spectrum of women regardless of their class affiliation. In this sense the case study of right-wing upper and middle class women constitutes a unique example by confirming the validity of these concepts, even though these women do not share the same class or partisan affiliation with Nicaraguan and Brazilian lower-class women. *Practical gender interests* therefore constitute an essential notion that helps us understand why women protest as mothers and housewives and why their maternal identity becomes politicized into so-called *militant motherhood*.

1.3 Masculinity in Latin America

The second concept that will be examined through this thesis is the concept of masculinity. Traditionally, masculinity is based on conceptions such as strength, control, power, independence, action and self-sufficiency (Barker, 2012: 312). Masculinity is a highly contested complex concept and there have been many different approaches and explanations such as essentialist view and the semiotic view (Ching, Backley and Lozano-Alonzo, 2007: 130-131). According to Fuller there is no “one masculinity” but rather multiple masculinities as this notion is always influenced by the position of men within the categories of race, ethnicity and class (Fuller, 2003: 136). Masculinity in a Latin American context is often connected with the concept of *Machismo*. This could be at the best defined as a cult of exaggerated virility and men’s domination over women (Craske and Chant, 2003: 12-13). This implies that masculinity is a cornerstone of *machismo*, as explained by Nencel: “In Latin America, the symbolic representation of masculinity and male sexuality merge in the concept of *machismo*” (1996: 57). For masculinity, the distinction between private and public spheres, with regards to gaining and confirming man’s masculinity, is again very important. Man confirms his masculinity if he is able to provide his family with necessary resources, thus he gains this recognition in the domestic sphere (Fuller, 2003: 143). However, he can only achieve the resources at work, which means that he has to be successful in the public sphere (Fuller, 2003:

143). “Therefore, work is the main foundation of masculine identity, in its version of manliness, because it transforms the male into a man” (Fuller, 2003: 143). In a loose sense it could even be said that if the politicians or military men (as a representatives of all the men in the nation) do not provide an adequate environment for the women in their nation, it could lead to a similar outcome: that of questioning masculinity.

In order to understand traditional notion of masculinity and what may cause its questioning, it is important to look how homosexuality is socially perceived. In traditional Latin American societies influenced by machismo and patriarchy, a homosexual male was seen as the complete opposite of a masculine man (Melhuus and Stølen, 2006: 99). Therefore to suggest that a man is a homosexual and call him a “faggot” or *maricón* will be perceived as humiliating for the man and such an act will inevitably damage his masculine character (Melhuus and Stølen, 2006: 99). As noted before, masculinity can be further infringed when a man mismanages his family and so threatens its security (Fuller, 2003: 143). Therefore when the man fails to provide his family with financial resources or the feeling of security, he will not be considered as “a real man” and this will inevitably lead to contesting his masculinity.

CHAPTER 2 Orchestration of Gender-based struggle: The Scare Campaign 1964

In the mid-1960s, Chile, along with other South American countries, was impacted by the Cold War. Leftwing ideas were rising all over the continent and Chile did not escape this trend. A crucial shift in the Latin American political arena occurred when the revolutionary forces of communist leader Fidel Castro took control of Cuba in 1959. This event proved highly disconcerting for the United States, which never expected the possibility of Soviet influence spreading to the Western hemisphere. This was also the case for the Chilean anti-Communist right-wing and centrist parties and their followers, which saw this Marxist revolution as a possible threat to their conservative hegemony in the country (Baldez, 2002: 33). Chilean Left-wing political parties (Communist party and Socialist party) had increased their appeal among the population even before the Cuban Revolution. They formed a new coalition called *Frente de Acción Popular* (Popular Action Front, FRAP), which grew steadily in its importance prior to the 1958 presidential election (Keen and Haynes, 2013: 441). The percentage of FRAP's supporters increased between 1957 and 1963 from 10.3 to 23.5 (Power, 2002: 72). The growing power of FRAP with its leader Salvador Allende was manifested in 1958 when Allende nearly won the presidential election (Francis and Vera-Godoy, 1971: 324).² In the same manner, as the right-wing political parties and the United States saw the Cuban revolution as a threat, the left perceived this event as a new stimulus and an example worth pursuing (Baldez, 2002: 33). This resulted in even greater division within Chilean society, which definitely submerged into the Cold war ideological struggle between the left and right.

With the coming presidential election of 1964, the right became aware that they had to come up with a very strong candidate, who would attract a widespread support and thus have the ability to defeat Allende. Shortly after the right-wing parties launched the presidential campaign with their candidate Julio Durán, they realized that Durán would not be a strong enough. That is

² Allende lost with liberal conservative candidate Jorge Alessandri. Allende earned 29 % of all votes, whereas Alessandri 31% (Powell, 1970: 381).

why the right wing National and Conservative Parties abandoned their candidate and decided to advise to people to vote for the centrist Eduardo Frei Montalva, a Christian Democratic Party candidate, whom they considered as less evil compare to Allende (Francis and Vera-Godoy, 1971:324). In the light of these events, the gender-based struggle started to form its ground. During the presidential campaign of 1964, the so-called *La Campaña de Terror* (Scare Campaign) was a pivotal instrument for the formation of the maternal protest. Margaret Power (2008) describes this campaign as “a multimedia propaganda blitz that used fear to convince Chileans that they should vote for Eduardo Frei and Against Salvador Allende” (Power, 2008: 931). The main motive of the campaign was to make Chileans realize that winning of Salvador Allende would result in an immediate danger to their families and would inevitably undermine women’s role as mothers. This campaign was designed by the right wing and centrist political parties,³ which realized that they had to find a strong appeal to make Chileans to not to vote for Allende. Furthermore they recognized the growing importance of women’s decision during elections (Baldez, 2002:36).⁴ The reason why they aimed this campaign especially at women was twofold. Firstly, the women’s votes determined the outcome of the previous presidential election in 1958 as the majority of women supported the right-wing candidate Jorge Alessandri (Powell, 1970: 381).⁵ Secondly, the women’s turnout at the elections was steadily growing (Power, 2008: 933).

The 1964 presidential election was an important period as women started to recognize what the possible threats of the ‘Communist’ politics were for them. Furthermore they started to institutionalize their struggle. Even though the women had not yet formed an actual protest movement, we can already see an emergence of women’s anti-Communist units e.g. *Acción*

³ The Scare campaign was also supported by the United States, which devoted considerable amount of financial resources to it (Baldez, 2002: 36).

⁴ Traditionally women and men have voted in separate polling stations in Chile; therefore we can analyze women (and men for that matter) voting patterns.

⁵ 34.1 % of women voted for Conservative Jorge Alessandri, whereas only 22.3% of women gave their vote to left-wing Salvador Allende (Powell, 1970: 381)

Mujeres de Chile (Women's Action of Chile). Which later proves an important concentration of leading Anti-Allende women.

2.1 The Role of the Newspaper, Radio and Pamphlets: Propaganda of the Scare Campaign

Media was the most important channel of primary formulation of the maternal topics among the women. Even though the women yet not felt a direct impact on their *practical gender interests*, as their livelihood or family was not threatened in actual terms yet; they started to perceive the possibility of this threat on the basis of the articles released in the newspaper, the radio ads and the pamphlets and posters distributed amongst them. Many of these articles were directly aimed at their maternal role and the possibility of jeopardizing this role if Allende was to assume the presidential office. There were two main national newspapers in the country, *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, which both played a crucial role in spreading the 'fear messages'. Between June and September 1964, many articles and ads were issued that were clearly aimed at women and their responsibility for family wellbeing.

For instance *El Mercurio* appealed to women's responsibility by following statement: "In the total privacy of your decision, no compromise, pressure or threat will be of any use. You and only you, who want the best for your husband and children, will know that you have voted for the man who, as President, will defend your freedom and rights, because the vote is secret" (*El Mercurio* 3 September 1964 – see Appendix A). Many articles in *El Mercurio* discussed stories from Cuba and other Communist countries such as the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia and the common denominator of all these stories was the horrific impact that would be imposed on Chilean women (and their families) if the Communists took over the country (Power, 2008: 940). For example "Chilean Mother: Fidel Castro sent 15.000 children to Russia, tearing them from their mothers' arms. If you don't want to lose your children, vote for Durán" (Burnett, 1970:

251).⁶ The articles not only alarmed the women about the possibility of “losing” their family, but also about the shift in the division of labor that would follow if a Communist government assumed power in Chile. The division of labor is seen as essential for the *practical gender interest* as it determines women’s role in the family (Molyneux, 1984: 233). “The Communist governments don’t worry about women’s lower physical resistance; in fact, they make them work on highways or heavy work on the trains or preparing the fields for cultivation. (*El Mercurio* 19 July quoted in Power, 2008: 941)”

Another powerful means for the spread of the propaganda was the radio. As Power points out, the radio was a crucial way of reaching women, most of whom stayed at home during the day, listening to the radio (2008: 939). This gender-based strategy was successful for a number of reasons. To begin with, most of the Chilean women in the mid 1960s did not work outside of their households. As Stoltz Chinchilla points out, less than 11 percent of women worked in 1964, moreover, a large number (40 percent) of these women worked as maids in other households (1977: 88). This fact shows that for the large majority of women their entire time revolved around their home and family, which inevitably puts vast degree of importance on their maternal role. Moreover, this media appeal could only have been successful in a conservative society such as the Chilean one where traditional notions of motherhood, based on the *marianismo* concept, were prevailing (Power, 2002: 5).

2.2 Beginning of Institutionalization of the Women’s Movement: Women’s Action of Chile

Women’s Action of Chile was established in the 1963 as an anti-Communist women’s organization. This organization was crucial as it represented the very first formation of women resisting Allende. Moreover it constituted a way in which ordinary Chilean women could enter the

⁶ Julio Durán was the third candidate in the 1964 presidential election, representative of Radical Party and whom the Right-wing parties had initially supported.

political sphere (Power, 2002: 77).⁷ As its leader Elena Larraín⁸ explains, the main reason why they set up the organization, was that they were worried by the growing influence of the left, which had become ever more threatening after the Cuban revolution, and that they were concerned how this influence might impact their family and *su patria*⁹ (Larraín Interview). This directly implies that these women formed this organization on the basis of their *practical gender interest*, as they saw securing the family and the nation as their main objective. Larraín further revealed that she and other conservative women that partook in the organization considered themselves to be “morally above the men” (Larraín Interview). Larraín’s statement clearly confirms that Chilean conservative women perceived their gender in very traditional way and clearly mirrors that their gender identity was built upon the notion of *marianismo*.

The Women’s Action Chile became a vital part of the ‘Scare Campaign’. They covered the streets of Santiago with posters that warned women about the Communist threat (Larraín Interview). They organized distribution of pamphlets that called on women to support Frei if they wanted to secure their families (Larraín Interview). According to Larraín the group consisted of 10.000 women nationwide, which indicates a massive appeal the group had on conservative women. Probably the most well known action that the Women’s Action of Chile took during the Scare campaign was the distribution of the tape-recording of Juana Castro’s speech to Chilean radio stations.¹⁰ In her proclamation, Juana Castro directly addressed the Chilean women and mothers to assume responsibility for their children and the ‘fatherland’ and not to let Chile follow the same path as Cuba; “Chilean mothers, I assume that you will not tolerate that your

⁷ In this and the following two sections I will refer to several interviews conducted by prof. Margaret Power, which she provided me with. Prof. Power carried out these interviews during her own research in Chile in the 1990s.

⁸ Elena Larraín was an upper class woman, with no partisan affiliation.

⁹ Larraín makes an interesting remark in the interview where she talks about *la patria* (the homeland) in a symbolic way, using the nation as a synonym for a family. By saying so she puts the responsibility for protecting *la patria* by women in the same level as protecting their families. (Interview)

¹⁰ Juana Castro was sister of Cuban communist leader Fidel Castro that exiled from Cuba and started cooperating with the CIA (Fletcher, 2009).

small kids become seized and sent to the Communist bloc, as it occurred in Cuba... The enemy is lying in wait; he is at your doorway. I call once more: Don't let yourselves be deluded! Be alert! Rely on your rights. Think of your families. Think of your children.¹¹ (Labarca Goddard, 1969: 70)" The Women's Action of Chile also distributed pamphlets that featured the speech (see Appendix B).

Final Remarks

This chapter has shown how the changes in Latin American politics and the spread of leftwing ideas in Chile impacted the 1964 presidential election. The media (newspaper, radio) and other means (posters, pamphlets) played a vital role in spreading the idea of the perils of Communism to Chilean families through traditional representations of motherhood and womanhood. Even though women did not experience any direct threat, they started feeling the fear of the possibility, which motivated them into formation of women organizations such as the Women's Action of Chile. Women's Action of Chile, which took a progressive part in the Scare Campaign, based its organizations on traditional notions of motherhood and its protection from the Communism. And as we shall see in the next chapter, this organization also played a role years later in organizing the March of Empty Pots and Pans. The Scare Campaign and the activities of the Women's Action of Chile proved to be successful and the center-right candidate Eduardo Frei defeated Allende and won the presidential election in 1964. The success of gender-based propaganda is confirmed by the result of election, as 63 % of women participants gave their votes to Frei, compared to only 32 % of votes that received Allende from his women supporters (Powell, 1970: 381).

¹¹ Translations from books, articles and interviews, written and conducted in Spanish, are mine.

CHAPTER 3 Threatening of Practical Gender Interests and Emergence of Militant Motherhood: The March of Empty Pots and Pans

A dramatic turn occurred with the following presidential election in 1970. The tough right-wing political parties and women organizations such as the Women's Action of Chile made an immense effort and devoted substantial resources to preventing the spread of leftwing political tendencies in the country and the victory of Salvador Allende, at this time as a leader of newly emerged left wing coalition called *Unidad Popular* (Popular Unity, UP).¹² This time they did not succeed. Allende's narrow victory¹³ in the 1970s presidential election can be explained (among other reasons) by the inability of the centrist and right-wing parties to find a consensus and send to an election a strong common candidate, which they later achieved in 1964 with Frei. The fact that the National Party and the Christian Democratic Party ran different candidates split the opposition vote and so cleared the way for Allende (Power, 2002: 137-138).

At the time of the 1964 Scare Campaign, the threats that Communism would cause to women and mothers were largely of an imaginary character. After Allende assumed power these threats started to gain a real shape, as economic policies implemented by Allende's government, but also mismanagement of agricultural sector (amongst other reasons¹⁴), which led to widespread shortages of basic foodstuffs (Keen and Haynes, 2013: 448). This shift from imaginary threats to tangible threats affected their daily life and explains the emergence of *militant motherhood* at the end of 1971.

As this chapter shows, the economic, political and social policies that Allende's government implemented led to conditions that challenged women's *practical gender interests*

¹² Popular Unity was a coalition of the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Radical Party, the Movement for United Popular Action, the Independent Popular Action Party, and the Social Democratic Party.

¹³ Allende won with 36 % of total votes and defeated Right-wing candidate Jorge Alessandri by mere 1%, as Alessandri received 35% of the votes (Francis and Vera-Godoy, 1971: 334).

¹⁴ United States substantially undermined Chile's economic situation by external means such as embargo on Chilean exports and imports, especially on copper – Chilean crucial resource (Keen and Haynes, 2013: 447).

and resulted in militarization of women on the basis of these threats to their maternal identity. The first section will look at the food shortages that started to occur in the second half of the 1970s and remained prevalent until the military coup, constituting the most important reasons why women's *practical gender interests* became threatened. The second section discusses the March of Empty Pots as an outcome of this threat. It will be analyzed how was the threat to the motherhood and its well-functioning reflected in framing of the March of Empty Pots and Pans. The analysis will be done by looking at the rhetoric and slogans used prior and during the March.

3.1 Shortages and Empty Kitchens

The food shortages represent a sample situation under which *militant motherhood* can evolve on the basis of dissatisfaction of *practical gender interests*. As Alvarez points out, *militant motherhood* emerges when women are hit by structural changes caused by governmental policies (1990: 51). When such a situation occurs the women will mobilize and politicize their maternal identity in order to express their discontent with an inability to secure high standards of living for their families (Alvarez, 1990: 50-51). The Chilean case bears all the prerequisites that drove women into political action on the base of their *practical gender interests*. Allende's economic policies were based on widespread nationalization of Chilean main enterprises but also middle and small-scale business (Keen and Haynes, 2013: 445-448). This led to sabotages by the owning elite and together with mismanagement of agrarian reform and US 'invisible blockade' on international trade with Chile resulted in vast foodstuff shortages (Keen and Haynes, 2013: 445-448). By mid-1971 there was a tremendous lack of the most basic foodstuffs such as bread, flour, meat; but also other basic necessities (e.g. toilet paper, detergent) (Pieper Mooney, 2007: 977). The lack of food gave rise to a black market where more wealthy Chileans could obtain food, however, the prices at the black market were too high for the middle and lower classes (Baldez, 2002: 66; Crummett, 1977: 111). Moreover, this lack of foodstuff also contributed to an increase of street violence that

negatively impacted the feeling of security of Chilean women and their children (Crummett, 1977: 111). This domino effect that led to a deterioration of security has a direct link to *practical gender interest*. Women blamed the government for causing the situation whereby the streets became an unsafe space for their children. As Elena Larraín recalls, despair was prominent amongst Chilean women at the time:

“Women were completely desperate, they had to wait long hours in lines or pay high amounts on the black market. But the prices were so high on the black market; normally one liter of oil would cost you about 9 pesos and on the black market would charge you 200 pesos. There was no milk for the children, no bread, not even a medicine to give your children when they became sick. It was extremely frustrating and many women started to feel that they were failing as mothers” (Larraín Interview).

This feeling of frustration and common feeling by many women that they failed as mothers, not being able to provide their children with food and security, constituted the main reason behind the nationwide mobilization of women and organization of the March of Empty Pots and Pans (Pieper Mooney, 2007: 977).

3.2 Militarization of Motherhood: The March of Empty Pots

The March of Empty Pots that took place on 1 December 1971 was an outcome of women’s dissatisfaction with current political and economic situation in the country. As both Power and Baldez claim (2002; 2001) The food and basic consumer goods shortages that jeopardized women’s capability of being good mothers and providing their children with all they need, constituted the most important reason why the mothers organized this protest. However, the protests were not just directed against the shortages itself but against the whole Allende’s administration which for them represented the Marxist evil responsible for all the chaos and despair. Another impulse for the March was the lengthy visit paid by the Cuban leader Fidel

Castro in Chile. Women were outraged that the president was embracing the enemy of womanhood. And his visit only confirmed even greater danger of communism to Chile (Baldez, 2002, 76-77; Baldez, 2001: 277; Power, 2002: 146-150).

Several texts appeared in Chilean newspapers and pamphlets that urged the women to take to the streets calling on them to join the March of Empty pots. Two examples clearly exemplify that the idea of motherhood was essential in the mobilization. It was a call to all women, regardless of their class or party affiliation. Motherhood in these excerpts is seen in its most essentialist sense. It expresses the unbearable conditions for being a mother and their despair, that could only be overcome if mothers politicized and took to the streets.

“We women are going to protest because there is no meat to make soup for our babies and as a result, they get sick from diarrhea; [...] We want our children to be educated in liberty and democracy and we protest against the brainwashing that occurs at schools. (*La Tercera* quoted in Baldez, 2001: 279-280)”

“Our nation is in crisis, and national solidarity is being destroyed by the criminal division between the classes, fabricated by the Communism to destroy the Chilean family. Chilean women and mothers cannot remain passive before the anguished moment that Chile is facing. Conscious of our responsibility to the nation and our children we will lend our unconditional support to the march. (Call for the March of Empty pots quoted in Thomas, 2011a: 69-70)”

The Women’s Action of Chile helped to spread these messages and acted as an organizer of the March (Larraín Interview). The calls on women proved to be successfully appealing as around five thousand women gathered on the *Plaza Italia* on the day of the march (Baldez, 2002: 78). Even though the protest was organized by the upper and middle class women, many women that turned out were from poor and working classes (Townsend, 1993: 43; Power, 2002: 164). This wide attendance proves that women, regardless of their class, felt that they had to express their feeling about mismanagement of governmental policies that brought the food shortages upon them.

Moreover, these women were drawn from a large spectrum of different political parties, ranging from The National Party, The Radical Party, The Christian Democratic Party, but also large number of independent women with no party affiliation (Baldez, 2002: 79). They were banging pots and pans, as a symbol of the lack of food they were facing (Waylen, 1992: 303). Alvarez claims the use of empty pots during a protest is a typical for *militant motherhood*, as it both represents the lack of food and can be used as a tool for making a noise and express discontent during the protest (Alvarez 1990: 99). The women were shouting slogans such as: “We have not even a bone in our pots and the government pretends to not to see that!”; “Allende listen! We women are here in large numbers!”; “The left is united and we have no food!”; “If there is no meat, smoke a Havana!” (*El Mercurio*, 2 Dec 1971 – see Appendix D). These slogans used during the protest shows that women’s rhetoric evolved around the topics of lack of food, blame on the government and the discontent with close tights with Marxist Cuba. It also shows that they developed their protest rhetoric as an answer to threats facing their *practical gender interests*.

At the time of the March of Empty Pots, we can see for the first time that women started to include a questioning of man’s masculinity in their rhetoric. As Maria Correa Morande¹⁵ says “men failed to provide us with the necessary security, Allende put us in this situation and the men did not do anything about it. That is why we had to take to the streets, as the men were not capable of standing up for us” (Correa Morande Interview). However at this time the women did not really do it strategically but merely acknowledged the fact that men were non-active. As we shall see in the next chapter, women only started to shed doubt upon male masculinity as a *strategic* tool in their fight against Allende in the 1973.

¹⁵ Maria Correa Morande was an upper class women and a member of the National Party of Chile. She was also one of the founding members of the Feminine Power.

Final Remarks

The March of Empty Pots represents a pivotal moment in the life cycle of anti-Allende women movement as it was the first time that women, regardless of their partisan and class affiliations, gathered together as mothers and women to protest against fatal conditions that were brought upon them as a result of Allende's "peaceful way to socialism". Women moved from the private sphere of their households to form a large-scale protest securing their position as mothers and to stand up for their traditional role within the division of labor. The march ended up in massive repression by the leftwing radical groups, leaving behind substantial number of women injured (Baldez, 2001: 78-79). In the aftermath of the march, the women formed a new organization called *El Poder Femenino* (The Feminine Power). The Feminine Power was crucial as it united all women from different women organizations such as The Women's Action of Chile, *Solidaridad, Orden y Libertad* (Solidarity, Order and Liberty), but also women with ties to different rightwing and centrist parties (e.g. The National Party, The Christian Democratic Party etc.) as well as many women with no party affiliation (Power, 2002: 169-170). The cross-class unity that these women created by establishing the Feminine Power played a decisive role in the following years.

CHAPTER 4 Militant Motherhood and Contesting Men's masculinity: The Anti-Allende women and the Military Men in the Allende Years

Between 1972 and 1973 women, united in The Feminine Power, engaged in many different strikes and anti-governmental actions such as the Coppermine strike, Truck drivers strike or a strikes against nationalization of the Bank of Chile and *La Papelera*, large paper producer company (Crummett, 1977: 106-107). An important moment came in March 1973 with the coming congressional election that could have shift the balance of power in the politics. The rightwing and centrist parties formed a new coalition called *Confederación Democrática* (Democratic Confederation CODE), in order to have a stronger concentration of votes (Thomas, 2011a: 84). They had hoped to win more than two-thirds of the seats in the Congress, which would allow them to impose an impeachment on Allende (Baldez, 2002: 107). However this plan was not successful, as CODE did not receive the needed amount of votes.¹⁶ This convinced the opposition that they had made use of all the democratic means at their disposition to get rid of Allende and thus the only possible way left was a military coup (Power, 2002: 220). The Anti-Allende women perceived it in the same manner. Since the March of Empty Pots, the situation for women had not improved actually the opposite. The shortages became even more severe in 1972 and by 1973 women felt that their situation was no longer sustainable. Moreover, in the spring of 1973, the government started discussing the educational reform called *Escuela Nacional Unificada*, ENU (The National Unified School) (Baldez, 2002: 109). This reform constituted another threat to women's *practical gender interests*, as it would directly affect their children. As Power explains it: "Conservative women opposed the ENU because they perceived it as an attempt on the part of the "communist state" to invade their homes and take control of their children" (2002: 36). The women organized demonstrations involving parents and teacher, to express their disagreement with implementing this reform (Crummett, 1977: 107). Even though this reform was, shortly after

¹⁶ CODE gained 55 % of the votes, which assured them a majority in the Congress however it did not gave them the necessary two-thirds for impeachment of Allende (Thomas, 2011b: 131).

its introduction, postponed, it contributed to the further polarization amongst Chileans and fueled women's anger with Allende (Baldez, 2002: 110).

In the 1973, the Anti-Allende women still mobilized as mothers and framed their rhetoric around the concept of motherhood and womanhood; but after the unsuccessful congressional election, which could have changed the political situation, they saw their only possible faith in the military men (Power, 2002: 222). In the months to come, the women changed their approach from solely demonstrating and supporting other anti-governmental action. They started to appeal strongly to the military men. The women urged the military to step in and take over the control of the country (Baldez, 2001: 282 – 283). The anti-Allende women further played a decisive role in resignation of General Carlos Prats, Commander in Chief of the Army and a loyal supporter of Constitutional President Allende (Power, 2002: 222). General Prats was said to have respected the notion of a democratically elected government, and that is why he was perceived by the opposition as standing in a way to the military coup (Nunn, 1975: 298).¹⁷ A turning point came in June 1973 when General Prats shot at a car of, an upper class women, Alejandrina Cox after she stuck her tongue out on him (Baldez, 2002: 112). This incident triggered a series of demonstrations that took place over the course of the month of August 1973. During these demonstrations the women called for Prats resignation and also involved a large number of wives of military officers, who, until that point, had been politically inactive (Baldez, 2002: 112). As a consequence, General Prats resigned his position on 24 August 1973 and President Allende appointed General Augusto Pinochet as Commander in Chief of the Army (Nunn, 1975: 301-304).

This last chapter shall argue, that Anti-Allende women in the last stage of their protest realized that on its own, protesting would not bring an end to their suffering and they therefore embraced rather tougher tactics. They started using to contest the traditional notion of Latin

¹⁷ Moreover, Prats was personally responsible for stopping the first attempt for military coup of 29 June 1973, which made him even more undesirable for the opposition (Power, 2002: 222).

American masculinity and *machismo* as a strategic tool in order to provoke the military men into action.

4.1 Contesting Masculinity of the Military Men

As said before, Masculinity and Virility are essential attributes of a Macho man. Furthermore Machismo implies the man's domination over a woman (Craske and Chant, 2003: 12-13). This widely held belief of Chilean men and its relation to women, is crucial for understanding how anti-Allende women contributed to the provocation of military men into the coup against Allende. Chilean anti-Allende women engaged in a number of actions that would be clearly aimed at questioning men's masculinity. They contested military men's masculinity on two levels that complemented each other. Firstly, the women suggested that the men were chickens (Power, 2002: 228). They did so by throwing corn, which was used as a feed for chicken, and feathers on the military men marching by. Women also sent them envelopes, lacking any letter that they stuffed with feathers, to suggest again that they were 'chickens' (Power, 2002: 228-229). Luis Torres, army officer from the Chilean Air Forces, confirms that the tactic these women embraced worked well: "The military considered themselves to be real macho men, therefore it was highly degrading for them to be called *maricónes* or chickens" (Luis Torres Interview). This explains how highly important the essence of homosexuality was in the perception of masculinity in the Latin American realm. As it was previously mentioned, to suggest that a Latin American men is "a faggot" will inevitably lead to humiliating him, as homosexuality is in traditional Latina American societies considered as the complete opposite of masculinity and machismo (Melhuus and Stølen, 1996: 95).

The second level of questioning of military men's masculinity that the anti-Allende women engaged in was connected with the concept of motherhood and the necessary protection men is obliged to give to his woman. Therefore, it is crucial for a man to be able to provide his

family with necessary resources and a feeling of security, as by doing so he can confirm his dominant masculine position within the domestic sphere (Fuller, 2003: 143). This can be nicely observed in the following quote from an unknown Anti-Allende woman interviewed by Crummett:

“We wrote letters to Leigh, Merino, and Pinochet (members of the junta) pleading them to save our families from the chaos and violence perpetrated by the UP. In the letters we not only questioned their duty as soldiers, but their virility, their machismo.” (Quoted in Crummett, 1977: 107).

This quote shows how the women used the responsibility a man has for his woman and family to appeal to the military. It further indicates that the two levels were interconnected as one usually accompanied the other. This statement also clearly demonstrates that women used the questioning of masculinity as something purely *strategic*, they were aware that the sense of machismo is immensely important for the military men (and for Chilean men in general for that matter). By humiliating them they could achieve their goals. The women from the Feminine Power also actively visited the military barracks in order to convince the military that the coup was the only way out of the hardship they had been living under Allende (Power, 2002: 229).

Final Remarks

After the congressional election in the March 1973, the women realized that their situation was not sustainable in the long-term and they shifted their focus from mere demonstrations and other anti-governmental actions to appealing to military. The idea was to make the military men realize that Allende's government had been jeopardizing the lives of women (and of all Chileans for that matter) and that the military had to step in and carry out a coup d'état. Even though the anti-Allende women still formulated their protests in the name of maternal identity, the last stage of this movement became unique for the practices of contesting masculinity and men's machismo as a strategic tool for achieving the women's desired political outcomes. They carried out various

actions of this character, such as throwing feathers and corn on the military, sending them feathers in envelopes or going personally to the barracks to appeal to them. Anti-Allende women played a decisive role in resignation of pro-government General Carlos Prats, and his resignation effectively cleared the way for General Augusto Pinochet. Eventually, the public support of the Anti-Allende women and their outcry for the military coup, gave Pinochet the necessary legitimacy for his decision (Baldez, 2002: 114).

Conclusion

To conclude, the case of Anti-Allende women in Chile, constitute a unique example of gender-based mobilization. This thesis demonstrated how this movement evolved from its early stage in the 1964 until the coup d'état in 1973. Most importantly, this thesis proved that the notion of motherhood and masculinity played an essential role in formation and maintenance of the anti-Allende movement. Moreover, these two notions entirely determined the nature of the whole movement. As we have seen, especially the maternal identity played a crucial role through out the whole examined period, whereas the notion of masculinity became crucially important in the last stage of the life cycle of the movement.

The three examined periods demonstrated how these concepts and its use either by the women or the politicians had a further impact on the situation in the country. As it became apparent the notion of motherhood was an essential in the propaganda against Allende during the presidential election in 1964. This propaganda, imposed on the women in the media and by other means such as pamphlets and posters, was widely based on highlighting the gender-based assumptions about traditional Chilean women and proposing the threat of women's *practical gender interests* based on the possibility of loosing her family if a communist government was to assume the power. This strategy proved to be successful as the women's votes determined the victory of Eduardo Frei. Moreover the women started to institutionalize the movement by establishing first women based anti-communist organization such as The Women's Action of Chile. The next examined period, around the March of Empty Pots and Pans at the end of 1971, demonstrated substantial shift from imaginary threat of *practical gender interests* to a real threat. This thread was fuelled by an immense scarcity of food and basic consumer stuff, which led to women's feeling that they are failing as mothers, because they cannot provide their children with necessary nutrition. As a consequence the women, despaired by the hardship imposed on them, started to militarize their maternal identity and organized a large anti-governmental protest, the

March of Empty Pots and Pans. The march then constitute a pivotal moment for the movement, because it is for the first time that we can clearly talk about emergence of *militant motherhood*. The last stage examined in this essay was dedicated to the pre-coup period in 1973. The analysis revealed that the notion of motherhood still played an essential role as the main identity of the protesters, however we could see an aggressive use of the questioning of men's masculinity as a purely strategic tool. This questioning of men's masculinity was especially applied on the military men as the anti-UP women saw the last and only possible solution to their desperate situation in the military intervention. As we all know, their desire was fulfilled and the Chilean armed forces took over the control of the country on the 11 September 1973.

The uniqueness of the case of Anti-Allende women lies in the applicability of the concept of *practical gender interests* on it. This concept was developed on a case study of popular class women in Nicaragua. However the anti-Allende women movement primarily constituted of upper and middle class women. This highlights the assumption that the gender interests can to certain extent transcend class affiliation and promote the essentialist view on gender interests. The same uniqueness could be observed in the case of the concept of *militant motherhood* which was developed on the case study of lower class women suppressed under a military dictatorship, however the case of anti-Allende women showed that it could be applicable on women from all classes that actually called for the military intervention and many of whom then supported Pinochet in his position during the period of the military dictatorship.

The importance and relevance of the Chilean case of Anti-Allende women becomes even more apparent in the light of events that took place in March 2014 in Venezuela, when masses of housewives and other women took to the streets of Caracas and other Venezuelan cities, banging pots and pans and expressing their discontent with the government of Nicolas Maduro, whose policies brought foodstuff shortages upon them. This shows that studying the Chilean case could help to deepen our understanding of a phenomenon that can emerge at any time at any place.

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en este
secreto momento
Chile
depende de usted...



En la absoluta soledad de su decisión
de nada valdrán ya los compromisos,
las presiones ni las amenazas.
Ud., y nadie más que Ud., que quiere
paz y seguridad para su marido y sus hijos,
y hacer un Chile mejor para todos,
sabrà que ha votado por el hombre,
que como Presidente, defenderà
su libertad y sus derechos, pues
el voto es secreto.

+ 2 EDUARDO FREI MONTALVA

COMANDO NACIONAL INDEPENDIENTE

JUANITA CASTRO

HABLA A LAS MUJERES DE CHILE...!



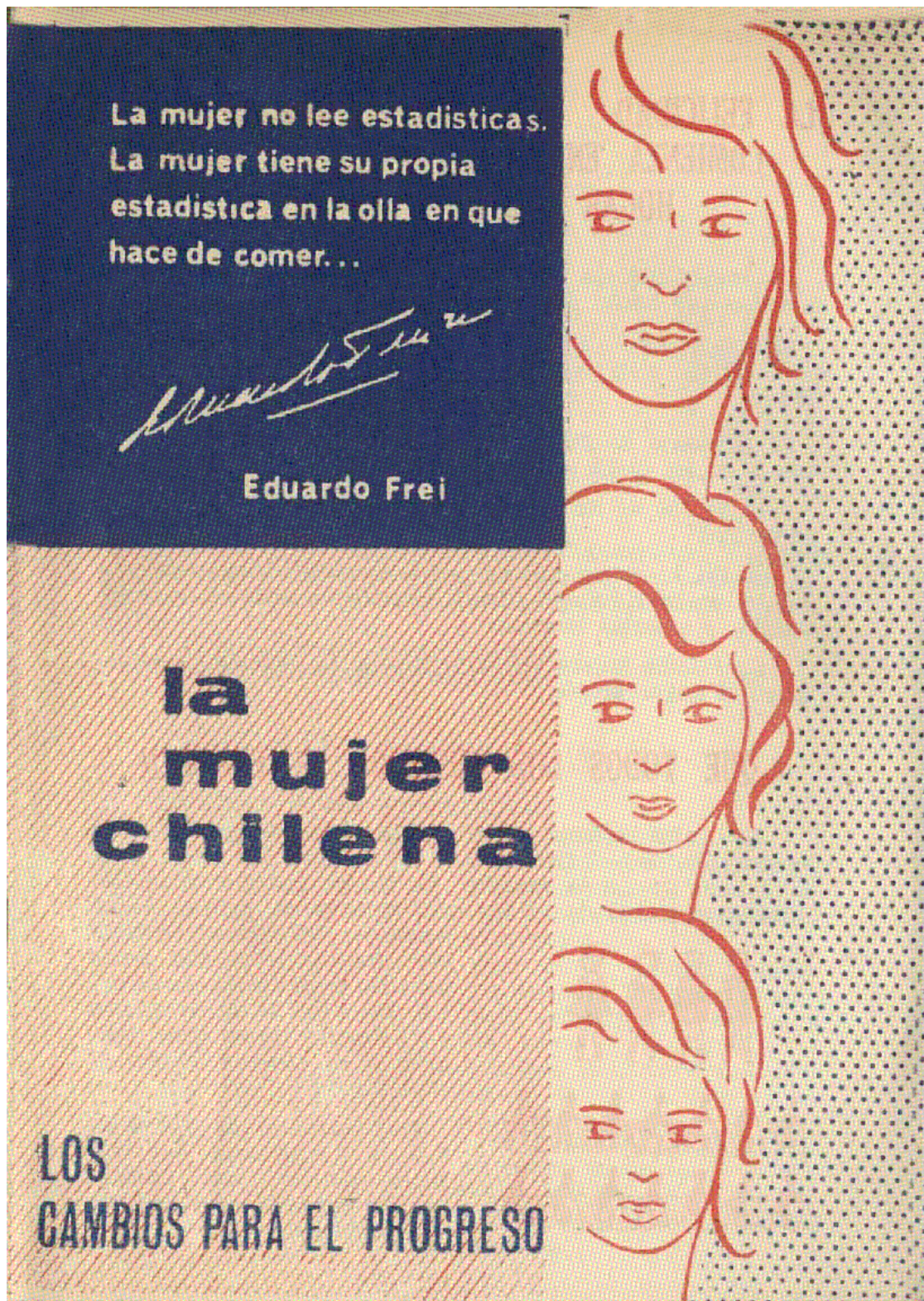
Escuche hoy este dramático mensaje
de una mujer cubana por las siguien-
tes Radio - Emisoras:

Radio Soc. Nac. de Minería
y su cadena de Emisoras
a las 21.10 hrs.

La Voz de Chile
y su cadena de Emisoras
a las 21.15 hrs.

Radio Corporación
a las 22.30 hrs.

memoriachilena.cl



fundado en Valparaíso el 12 de Sept 1827
Año CLV - Nº 48.982 (M. C. R.)
PRIMER CUERPO

EL MERCURIO

Santiago de Chile, Jueves 2 de Diciembre de 1971

fundado en Sept. el 12 de Junio 1827
Año LXIII - Nº 25.785 (Es propiedad)
PRECIO: E\$ 2,30 ó \$ 2,300
AEREO: E\$ 1,70 ó \$ 1,700



Miles de mujeres marcharon ayer desde Plaza Baquedano hasta el centro de Santiago para protestar por el desmantelamiento de la falta de garantías democráticas en la Universidad de Chile y el secretariado de la Unidad Popular. La "Marcha de las cacerolas vacías" tuvo violenta represión. Efectivos extremistas se apoderaron de bombas y gases para contener la multitudinaria manifestación. Carabineros disolvió a las columnas de mujeres con bombas lacrimógenas. Lo que se inició como un desfile de duras de casa, que incluyó llevaban a sus niños, terminó en violentos incidentes con mujeres intoxicadas por el gas de las bombas

Magna Concentración en la Capital-

Protesta Femenina por las Ollas Vacías

La más grande concentración femenina en Chile se dio ayer en la Plaza Baquedano, cuando miles de mujeres se reunieron para protestar por el desmantelamiento de la falta de garantías democráticas en la Universidad de Chile y el secretariado de la Unidad Popular y el desmantelamiento de la falta de garantías democráticas en la Universidad de Chile y el secretariado de la Unidad Popular.

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Transectos auxilian a una joven que intenta la marcha y que por efecto de las bombas lacrimógenas que lanzó Carabineros se desmayó.



Con sus manos y cacerolas en alto, las mujeres protestan por la violenta represión que usó un gran número de bombas lacrimógenas, como se observa en la foto, captada en Alameda, frente al cine Santa Lucía.



Violentos incidentes que culminaron con gran número de personas heridas, se registraron en la tarde de ayer en la capital durante la marcha de las ollas vacías que efectuaron las mujeres de nuestra ciudad de protesta por el desmantelamiento de la falta de garantías democráticas en la Universidad de Chile y el secretariado de la Unidad Popular.

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