

Paula Remembers.

‘Paula.’

On the 11th of September 1973, I was sleeping at home when my mum came to my room to give me the news. Why, on a Tuesday, was I in my small town, at home, and not at the dorm – or ‘pensionado’ as we called it – where I was living while studying or in classes at the university? Maybe we had already broken up for the national holidays we have every year in September (‘fiestas patrias’)? I don’t remember.

I got up and rushed to the ‘asentamiento’¹ San Rafael del Bajo, to implement a plan of resistance. But, sadly, as is well known and documented, we did not have anything except some forks and shovels...

I have always searched, to no avail, for the words that could truly reflect my feelings, my deep sadness and great sense of loss felt on that fateful day. I have only been able to come up with understatements.

Despite the coup being a foretold event for most supporters of Allende, nothing prepared us for the aberration that was the civil- military dictatorship of Pinochet. We were not used to or prepared for the level of human deprivation shown by Pinochet’s civilian accomplices and henchmen.



Paula with her brothers and her only doll. Private Collection.

Now, as we commemorate 50 years since the coup, I cannot but be immensely sad that impunity and denialism is what prevails in my country. It never crossed my mind that once recovered or ‘returned to democracy’ most of the crimes against humanity committed by the Pinochet dictatorship would be still largely unpunished under the complicit eyes of those arrogant leaders and supporters of the transition.

¹ Name given to a ‘fundo’ – a – Chilean landed estate that often includes ranching and farming – that as part of the Allende government’s land reform was passed on to the peasants to manage.



I will continue remembering until my last breath all our Chilean brothers and sisters killed, disappeared, raped, tortured, honouring those fighting for justice and against impunity. I hope that sooner rather than later Chile is lucky enough to get a decent and brave Chilean that will follow Allende's example and who, when placed in a historic position, will be loyal to the programme and to the people that elected them.