

# Chilean exiles in the Netherlands

Activism, memories and traumas

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**If you forget me**

By Pablo Neruda (The Captain's verses, 1952/1972:77)

*In want you to know  
one thing.*

*You know how this is:  
if I look  
at the crystal moon, at the red branch  
of the slow autumn at my window,  
if I touch  
near the fire  
the impalpable ash  
or the wrinkled body of the log,  
everything carries me to you,  
as if everything that exists,  
aromas, light, metals,  
were little boats  
that sail  
toward those isles of yours that wait for me.*

*Well, now,  
if little by little you stop loving me  
I shall stop loving you little by little.*

*If suddenly  
you forget me  
do not look for me,  
for I shall already have forgotten you.*

*If you think it long and mad,  
the wind of banners  
that passes through my life,  
and you decide  
to leave me at the shore  
of the heart where I have roots,  
remember  
that on that day,  
at that hour,  
I shall lift my arms  
and my roots will set off  
to seek another land.*

*But  
if each day, each hour,  
you feel that you are destined for me  
with implacable sweetness,  
if each day a flower  
climbs up to your lips to seek me,  
ah my love, ah my own,  
in me all that fire is repeated,  
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,  
my love feeds on your love, beloved,  
and as long as you live it will be in your arms  
without leaving mine.*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses the memories and traumatic experiences of Chileans in the Netherlands. Those exiles have vivid memories about the coup on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September of 1973. Six of the informants have been in prison and have been tortured. Such events and others can cause deeply rooted traumas. Thousands of Chileans went into exile to the Netherlands via the Dutch embassy in Santiago, Chile or received visa through the UN. During the first period in the Netherlands all the informants were active in the solidarity movement and in Chilean political parties. After the dictatorship ended all informants changed their focus onto their work and families in the Netherlands however they kept longing for Chile. The research findings are being compared with theories on exile, collective memory and cultural trauma. Various coping mechanisms of the Chilean exiles with their possible traumas also come to the fore. The research took place in various Dutch cities and informants were found using snowball sampling. Their life histories were written down based on long and open interviews.

Keywords: exile, collective memory, trauma, cultural trauma.

## **Introduction**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September of 1973, under the leadership of General Pinochet, the Chilean army attacked the Moneda Palace in Santiago with tanks and bombs. This day is set in the hearts and minds of Chileans. It is their 11<sup>th</sup> of September on which their socialist president Salvador Allende was killed. Allende was and remained a rather controversial figure in Chile, a true socialist hero to many and a detested politician to others. After the coup years of repression followed and left activists were hunted down. Thousands of Chileans got arrested and tortured in police stations, football stadiums or army barracks. Popular torture techniques constituted of blindfolding, electrocution, fake executions and rape. The society of Chile has dealt with a cultural trauma because of the state terror and the climate of fear that arose from it. Citizens saw how their social life and community bonds ruptured. Many prisoners were forced to go into exile. Those exiles battled with their traumas in their new countries remembering their experiences individually and collectively in their diaspora communities. All over the world Chilean exiles continued their political activism.

So far there has been done little anthropological research in the Netherlands about Chilean political refugees who experienced the dictatorship. Most research that has been done in the Netherlands, related to refugees and immigrants with traumas, is practiced in the field of psychology and medical anthropology. Hondius and van Willigen (2000) for example studied health problems among Latin American and Middle Eastern refugees in the Netherlands with a focus on socio-psychological aspects. My research also deals with the socio-psychological aspects of political refugees because it analyzes their traumas and effects of the exile. The focus of my research is on relating the individual life stories and experiences to the social context and the events that took place as well as to the collective stories. I wanted to find out what kind of meaning the former political refugees give to their experiences during the dictatorship and to the coping mechanisms they developed. This research is relevant to society because it is necessary to understand how political exiles and their children are coping with their possible traumatic experiences in the Netherlands in order to develop their lives and live their lives to the full. To the Dutch government it is important that immigrants participate in society. The government should know what the exiles need in order to succeed. Research in that field is therefore important. On a different level this research is significant for

the remembrance of what happened to the thousands of Chileans in the period of 1973 until 1990 in Chile and in their countries of exile. This thesis contributes to that historical memory.

The objective of this research is to explore how the Dutch-Chileans remember their experiences of the dictatorship and how they cope with possible traumas. My central question is; how do Chileans political refugees of the first and second generation in the Netherlands remember and cope with traumatic incidents which were experienced during the dictatorship in Chile, their flight and their exile? The research questions that will help to answer the central question are categorized by the three concepts that are discussed in chapter one namely collective memory, cultural trauma and exile. The research questions are:

- How do Chilean political refugees in the Netherlands remember the dictatorship and the repression of the 1970's and 1980's in Chile?
- Why and how did Chilean political refugees in the Netherlands have to leave their home country?
- How did Chilean political refugees in the Netherlands experience their new lives in the Netherlands?
- Which problems do Chilean political refugees in the Netherlands experience as a result of the dictatorship and the repression in their home country?
- How do Chilean political refugees in the Netherlands cope with the problems they have as result of the dictatorship and the repression they experienced in their home country?

This research was conducted from 1-02-2010 until 31-05-2010. The research field was in the Netherlands and the respondents live in Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, Arnhem, Groningen and Nijmegen. My method of research was interviewing the informants about their life histories. These interviews were recorded but also written down. In total fifteen people have been interviewed who were all born in Chile. Four of them are of the second generation who went into exile as children therefore eleven informants were adults when they went into exile and were politically active in Chile. Eight of them are men and seven women. The first generation of informants is above the age of fifty-eight and the second generation is of the age 38 or older. There is a group that came to the Netherlands right after the coup in 1973 and the other group arrived between 1974 and 1979.

Through snowball sampling, finding informants via informants that I already had, I met more and more former political Chilean exiles to interview. I knew



through my work for the Latin American Film Festival that Pablo Eppelin from Noticias in Amsterdam, who made video reports on the festival last year, is Chilean and that he had a lot of contact with Latin Americans in the Netherlands. Through him I met my next informant Patricio Aravena. Also through the reading of the archives of the Chile committees in the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam I found names that I searched for on the internet. By searching the internet for Chilean political refugees I found a lot of articles and interviews on websites like Noticias.nl and Mapuche.nl, email addresses and telephone numbers which I could use. Via the informant Juan Heinsohn Huala for example I received contact information of Elena Fredes, Benito Sanchez and Boris del Valle Ruiz. A lot of former political Chilean exiles still know each other and that made the snowball effect work well. Thirteen of the informants have allowed me to use their full names and two informants wished to be anonymous.

This thesis has been constructed as follows. After this introduction chapter one memory and trauma of the exile continues and discusses the concepts of cultural trauma, collective memory and exile. The next chapter Chile's dictatorship: 1973-1990 will focus on the context of Chile and of the Chileans in the Netherlands after which the context will be related to the three above mentioned theoretical concepts. In the third, fourth and fifth chapter the theoretical concepts will be illustrated and analyzed using the data of the interviews. This has been structured in three sections namely; exile, memory and trauma and coping with trauma. The thesis will be completed by the conclusion wherein I connect the theory with the research findings and where I will answer the central question.

## **1. Memory and trauma of the exile**

This theoretical framework discusses the concepts of cultural trauma, collective memory and exile. These themes are applicable to the subjects of my research: the Chilean exiles in the Netherlands. After the concepts are explained the history of the Chilean dictatorship will be discussed and related to the theoretical concepts.

### 1.1 Collective memory

Memory is generally considered as individually based; it goes on in someone's own head. Collective memory, however, is defined as recollections of a shared past that are preserved by members of a group that experienced it. I find the term collective memory a beautiful concept that covers a wider view of remembering as something that people do together (Eyerman in Alexander et al 2004). The concept has been first used by Maurice Halbwachs (1992) who in turn is inspired by Emile Durkheim. He argues that memories are acquired through society and that remembering is tied to a collective framework. Memory orders experiences and ensures the continuity of collectives (Vroomen & Coser 1993; 511). For me, the explanation that gives most value to the concept is the following. Memory does not exist out of individuals but it is never individual in character. In other words, individuals do the remembering rather than groups but individuals remember only or primarily as members of social groups (Wilson 2005; 232). Especially when cultural trauma, which will be discussed in the following paragraph, occurs in a society then that affects a collective which has a collective memory of that traumatic event. A slightly different view or just a more broadened view is that of Radley (1990). He states that memory is not located in the heads of individuals but rather "within the discourse of people talking together about the past" (Radley 1990).

Collective memory is also explained by Eyerman (2004) as it provides the individual with a cognitive map on which the present behaviour can be traced back. It is called a social necessity. Another view is that of Giessen (2004) stating that collective memory provides the individual and society with a temporal map that unifies a nation through time and space. These statements link history with collective memory. Collective memory is also conceived as the result of interaction, a process of conversation that enables people to define themselves and through which identities are being shaped. Scholars as Neal (1998) and

Eyerman (2004) notice that collective memory is shaped through dialogue, groups and subjective history; it looks similar to myth. They argue that the memory is subjective and that the experienced events change over time because of the constant collective remembering and adjusting it to their own needs and attitudes. Similar to collective memory but executed differently is the academic discipline of history which tries to analyze objective stories of the past (Eyerman in Alexander et al 2004).

In the text above the collective memory is explained as the individual memories in one's own head and the collectively interacted memories. That deals with face-to-face contact. However, Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' can be included to collective memory. Citizens of a nation can feel united and have a feeling of belonging to each other whatever the size of a nation is and regardless of whether they would have actually met each other or not. They belong to an imagined community. Because of globalization, exile and immigration collective memory increasingly transcends borders, spaces and time (Eyerman in Alexander et al 2004). The collective memory can also be articulated through cultural institutionalized forms like film and art but also oral stories, gestures, rumors and written stories (Pennebaker et al 1997).

The collective remembering has multiple functions like fostering social cohesion, to develop and defend social identification, and to justify current attitudes and needs (Pennebaker et al 1997). Political events for example are being commemorated when they are remembered and served the above mentioned functions. However, it is different when political events are traumatizing. Those 'silent memories' are often being repressed and forgotten. This can even divide a whole society and smaller communities. Suppressing memories is a much seen process of collective memory. For example in the case of dictatorships that create climates of fear, denial and a forced silence when the subject is the traumatic events like torture or forced disappearances. It is also analyzed that after the episode of silence and inhibition, for example during democratization, the trauma is being articulated in society and people remember the traumatic events collectively. It is important to note that such traumatic events do not have to be personally experienced. Family members or friends of people who experienced such events can pass their memories onto others. It is then called a 'socially distributed memory' (Pennebaker et al 1997).

## 1.2 Cultural trauma

The concept of trauma has been familiar in departments of medicine and psychology but Pitirim Sorokin introduced the theme into the world of sociology in 1967. He wrote about the biological and demographic affects of the 1917 Soviet revolution on the society. Later on Piotr Sztompka elaborated on the term and called it cultural trauma that he explains as “trauma of change’ inflicted on the body of a changing society’ (Sztompka 2000; 450). Jeffrey Alexander (2004) quotes Erikson when he clarifies the concept of collective trauma. Cultural trauma is always collectively. The psychoanalyst Erikson (1976) explains that by collective trauma implies that social life and the community have been damaged:

*“By individual trauma I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defence so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively... By collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with “trauma”. But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. “We” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body” (Erikson 1976; 153-154).*

Smelser argues that collective cultural trauma also harms the collective or national identity. It can either disrupt the community and identity or solidify identity and community (Smelser in Alexander et al 2004).

Cultural trauma appears after a major social change which happens abrupt and quick and which is radical and hits deep into society. This social change is imposed and comes from the outside because trauma always occurs to somebody unwittingly. These kinds of events also happen as a shock and are unpredicted and unexpected. Sztompka sums up several examples like revolution, radical economic reform, forced migration, genocide, acts of terrorism, assassination of political leaders, and collapse of an empire. A cultural trauma has its own sequence and starts with the structural and cultural background and then the event it self. Afterwards, the traumatizing events are being defined and interpreted by society. Also specific traumatic symptoms will be apparent like

certain behaviour or belief patterns and opinion making. The last element in the sequence is the post-traumatic adaptation which precedes the overcoming of the trauma if that succeeds (Sztompka 2000).

Traumatic events can shake up an entire society which becomes disorganized and human life and society loses its homogeneity and solidity. Sztompka (2000) speaks of 'cultural disorientation'. Eisenbruch (1991) speaks of 'cultural bereavement' when talking about the destruction of cultural institutions and social structures which leads towards the non-existence of frameworks to structure the suffering and continue with living. When certain traumatic events occur people will search their own culture for meanings which makes them always a cultural construction, according to Sztompka. Often these events will shatter the existing meanings and values in a society. And because cultural trauma can hit so deep and because it can linger for a long time, sometimes over multiple generations Sztompka sees cultural trauma as the most threatening cultural phenomenon (Sztompka 2000). Cultural trauma can be related to the imagined community of Benedict Anderson which implies that a nation-state can be so immense people do feel a belonging to each other. Cultural trauma is not visible to the eye however it does connect a group of people as a society that endures a trauma. A classic example of deep lingering cultural trauma is the aftermath of the Holocaust in Germany. Also Latin American societies still suffer from the dictatorships and its state terror that happened 30, 20 and 10 years ago (Sztompka 2000).

At the individual level traumatic experiences can result in emotions like anxiety, guilt, shame, humiliation, disgust, and anger. It affects the personal identities of individuals (Alexander et al 2004). Sztompka (2000) argues that some people are better equipped to cope with trauma because of their education, tolerant and relativistic attitudes or social rootedness. He discusses Merton's four adaptations in his article (2000) to anomie, which is a concept that falls in the same category as trauma and is related to it, with innovation as the first one which entails efforts that aim at improving conditions. The second one is rebellion which is more a radical effort to improving one's living conditions. Ritualism is the third form of adaptations and constitutes of passive returning to traditional ways of life. And the last form is retreatism which entails the passive ignoring or repressing of the trauma (Sztompka 2000). In some cases, when the trauma is severe and if the victim is helpless and fixated on the trauma, the trauma will not

heal. Freud spoke of traumatic memory as an indelible imprint that produces permanent effects (Alexander et al 2004).

The social sharing or collectively remembering can result in adjustment of an emotional event. By sharing with a group of people who have experienced the same events one can attain comfort, understanding and a sense of belonging from it. At the other hand, some scholars argue that social sharing can disrupt the healing process and re-stimulate the traumatic experiences. This can have negative results (Pennebaker 1997).

There exists also another aspect of trauma which manifests itself in a post-traumatic stress disorder. This means that traumatic events will lead to high levels of stress with an individual which can manifest in certain symptoms such as obsessive reliving the event, dreams thereof, flashbacks, efforts to avoid circumstances reminding one of the traumatic event and the inability to remember an important aspect of the trauma (Antze & Lambek 1996; 156). It is very important to note that trauma can exist with someone who did not experience the event itself but that it happened to a family member or friend. When children grow up with parents who are traumatized and cannot offer sufficient physical and emotional protection then it is possible to speak of trans-generational trauma (van Dijk 1995).

### 1.3 Exile

Exile means literally banishment that constitutes of a political action that forces someone to leave his country. According to that definition, exile is always involuntarily. However, in practice exile is used interchangeably with terms as refugees, expatriates or immigrants which are used describing people that forcefully or voluntarily left their home countries (Barbour 2000). For an exile, the moment of departure and having to live and adjust in a different country can be traumatic and remains the most pivotal experience in his or her life. For many exiles it is difficult to feel at home in their host countries which feels for them as having no home at all or it means that they live betwixt and between. This can lead to a life that revolves around the longing to go back to the home country (Barbour 2007). Exiles start to live in host countries with their dreams and careers destroyed and their families torn apart. In Western European countries, like the Netherlands, exiles received financial assistance and governmental programs helped them to start a new life focusing on language, study, work and housing (Wright & Oñate 2007).

Exiles that live in the same host country tend to come together in order to keep their identity and culture alive. They often organize folkloric groups, debating gatherings, musical evenings and publish newsletters or periodicals (Wright & Oñate 2007). When exiles form communities with fellow nationals, which are called diaspora, they in a way move the borders of their home country and create a national community outside their home country (Sznajder & Roniger 2007). That way they still feel part of their country of origin and the 'imagined community' of the nation-state which transcends borders (Anderson 2006).

Political exile is not static, exiles do not depart their country and move to another and that is it. Exiles form communities in their host countries and can be pro-active in the sense of politics and mobilizing support for their cause. Political exile develops and transforms along with the changing political institutions and global discourses (Sznajder & Roniger 2007).

#### 1.4 Three concepts connected

Collective memory, cultural trauma and exile are concepts that can be related to each other. When there exists a cultural trauma there is also a collective memory of the traumatic events. Many exiles have endured a cultural trauma after which they were forced to leave their country and they also remember it collectively. Going into exile can be traumatizing as well. Collective memory can be articulated when resolving a cultural trauma among exiles (Eyerman in Alexander 2004). Refugees and exiles have often endured cultural traumatic events like state repression, torture, other extreme violence or the threat thereof and struggle with the consequences like PTSD, depression and substance abuse. Some symptoms of the PTSD can also exist among family members or friends of the ones who experienced terrible traumatic events (Wenzel et al 2000).

The cultural trauma that exiles have experienced in their country of origin plus the physical trauma and the trauma of exile can be coped with through collective remembrance in their own communities in the host country. In the next paragraph the history of Chile will be discussed and the three concepts will be related to the contexts of that country.

## **2. Chile's dictatorship: 1973-1990**

Before analyzing the research data it is necessary to discuss the history of Chile. In this section the period before the coup and the dictatorship will be described. Furthermore, the theoretical concepts analyzed in the previous paragraph will be discussed and explored within the context of Chile.

### 2.1 Before the coup

In the 1960's national strikes, mobilizations and student rebellions increased across the whole of Chile. The Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) was founded in 1965 and started with an armed struggle against capitalism which entailed bomb attacks and bank robberies (Collier & Sater 2004).

The 1970's presidential election was won by Salvador Allende who was part of a popular coalition and was called the United Popular government. Parties such as the socialists, the communists, the radicals and the social-democrats were part of that coalition but also some smaller parties as the Unitary People's Action Movement (MAPU). Right wing politicians feared Allende for his leftist and communist policies. But also within Allendes' government there was friction between the different leftist ideals and strategies. Further more, two out of three Chilean voters had voted against Allende (Collier & Sater 2004).

Allende introduced big changes for Chile. He nationalized the profitable copper mines in order to let the Chilean population benefit from the profit. Agrarian reform was also on the wish list of the left and it meant that all farms should not be larger than eighty hectares which was positive for all small farmers and negative for the big powerful landowners. The United Popular government increased public access to the social security system and provided enhanced state benefits such as increased family allowances. However, copper profits plunged and agricultural production decreased as well as the salaries of the workers. The cost of living rose by 22 percent in 1971 and the deficit increased also. Because of the economic malaise opposition grew the following years (Collier & Sater 2004; 334-349).

### 2.2 The dictatorship

In 1973 parts of the military attacked president Allendes' party members and party offices and finally the Moneda palace which was bombed. It is still not clear if president Allende killed himself or was killed during the attack on the palace.



Collier and Sater state in their book that he shot himself through the head with a machine gun (Collier & Sater 2004; 357-358).

General Pinochet became president and implemented the National Security Doctrine which justified the government to pursue leftists with repression and violence. The DINA, the new secret police was responsible for the torture and disappearances of the 'national enemies'. Thousands of political prisoners were hidden away in detention centres with Villa Grimaldi as its most notorious one (Collier & Sater 2004; 259-261). According to the report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation (1994) 2279 people died for political reasons during the dictatorship.

### 2.3 Chile's collective memory

In 1990, the democratic government of president Aylwin formed a Commission for Truth and Reconciliation which gave out a report with a historical and institutional analysis (Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation 1990). In Chile almost immediately a national narrative and memory was constructed. Military officers were also being prosecuted, however pardoned a few years later (Roniger & Sznajder 1997).

President Aylwin (1990-1994) tried to recover the truth about the civil war through the national commission. The collective or national memory was shaped via ceremonies where family of the disappeared received respect and attention. Also a memorial wall at the General Cemetery and a reburial of former president Allende with presidential attention and respect contributed to the collective memory (Wilde 1999).

### 2.4 Chile's cultural trauma

Due to the atrocities the Chilean society was traumatized. Their belief in justice and politics was diminished or shattered (Robben 2005). Trauma caused by repression, threats or torture lead to serious psychological problems at the individual level. As Eastmond (1989) states in her dissertation; Chilean exiles in the US suffered from survivor guilt, anger, depression, sleeping disorders, mental numbness, aggression and paranoia. Sundquist and Johansson (1996) did research on Latin American refugees in Sweden and found that experiences of torture are related to a high risk of psychological distress and ill-health. The Latin American refugees that had been tortured have a higher incidence rate of health complaints than those who have not been tortured. Two thirds of the torture

victims researched had trouble with sleeping, irritability, anxiety and depression. Sundquist and Johansson (1996) conclude that support of family from the own ethnic community diminishes the risk of long term depression by increasing a sense of identity and belonging.

### 2.5 Chile's exiles

Latin American dictatorships during the 1970's and 1980's forced many leftist political activists into exile as strategy to eradicate their enemies in addition to the mass killing. Many Chileans fled to Argentina but when Argentina also became a dictatorship they had to flee again. Thousands of Chileans fled to, among others, the US, Mexico and Europe after the coup of 1973. According to a 1980 Mexican census some 3345 Chileans stayed in Mexico (Sznajder & Roniger 2007). Sweden received 56500 Latin American refugees and exiles during 1969 and 1992 from which the highest number were Argentineans, then Chileans and the lowest number Uruguayans (Sundquist & Johansson 1996).

The Netherlands invited Chileans to its country and gave them visa to stay. In the Netherlands there were 4856 Chileans (CBS). However, no data is available from which year they lived in the Netherlands. The majority came to the Netherlands as an exile which means that they came between 1973 and 1979 and the ones that came out of economic reasons are more likely to have arrived in the Netherlands between 1983 until now.

In the following paragraphs I will elaborate more on the above mentioned subjects but then connected with my research data.

### 3. Exile in the Netherlands

*...for some reason I am a sad exile. In some way I am travelling with our country,  
and the elongated features of my native country, far away,  
still move inside me (Pablo Neruda, Memoirs 1974/1977).*

In this section the concept of exile will be analyzed by the data obtained from the research and interviews with the first and second generation Chileans in the Netherlands who are former political refugees. Thousands of Chileans who were on the left side of the political spectrum in 1973 fled after the coup to countries in the whole world because the dictatorship of General Pinochet repressed them and made them enemies of the state. Thousands of other Chileans got arrested because of their political ideals and membership of left parties and got the chance to go into exile after a period in prison. Both groups did not have the choice to stay or leave. They were forced to leave due to the threatening situation of repression or they had the choice between prison time and exile. This chapter is structured in three paragraphs namely the forced leaving, betwixt and between and active political diaspora. These paragraphs describe how the Chileans were forced to leave Chile and how they felt and lived in their new country.

#### 3.1 The forced leaving

In order to maintain control over Chile, Pinochet decided to get rid of his political enemies which he labelled the nation's enemies: the left political activists and party members. According to Wright and Zúñiga (2007) the forced exile was a strategy of dictator Pinochet (Wright and Zúñiga 2007). The forced leaving happened in various manners. One violent manner was first arresting and torturing a person after which that person was told to leave the country or else prison awaited. Most prisoners chose exile. In other cases men and women served years in prison under harsh conditions after which Pinochet sent out a decree<sup>1</sup> in 1975 giving political prisoners the choice of going into exile, without the right to return, or serving their prison sentence until the end (Sznajder & Roniger 2007). Other thousands of Chilean political activists felt threatened in such a way they felt forced to leave Chile and searched a safer country to live in (Wright and Zúñiga 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> Decree law 504 of 30 April 1975

There were two groups of Chileans that arrived in the Netherlands. The first group arrived in 1973 and 1974 and consisted of people who were not arrested by the regime and were invited by the Dutch government. That group consisted of 322 persons from the Dutch embassy in Chile and refugee camps. The second group was also invited by the government and arrived from 1975 until 1984 and consisted of about 1195 Chileans. The selection of these invited Chileans happened sometimes through embassies and sometimes through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Also several solidarity groups and Latin American political parties selected and recommended people, mostly people who -due to political activities- were sentenced to long years in prison and could be changed into exile. Many exiles spent some time in a recuperation camp in Chile to recover of possible consequences of abuse before they went to the airport (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland 1985; 9).

The UN began their work in Chile one week after the coup. More than 200.000 Chileans were being provided for with shelter and support by the UNHCR in the surrounding countries. They focused during the years after the coup on reunifying the families of Chilean refugees. Requests were made asking countries to open their doors for these exiles and refugees. In 1990, after the dictatorship, the UNHCR also organized the repatriation of Chilean exiles to Chile (Refugees Magazine 1996). In other cases a special committee selected them. In the Netherlands the committee van Lier was formed in 1975 after the first group arrived in September 1973 and constituted of civil servants of the Dutch ministry of culture, recreation and social work, ministry of social affairs and employment, the UN Refugee Agency and the Dutch centre for foreigners. The committee traveled to Chile in order to see for themselves which prisoners and political activists, who fled to the Dutch embassy in Santiago, Chile, could be considered to be invited to go the Netherlands (Ten Doesschate 1993).

The exiles were welcomed at the Dutch airport Schiphol by a social worker of a commission of Chileans and accompanied to an asylum which could be a hotel, vacation house or a flat. The social worker would help the exiles with communicating with the government, organizations, doctors and schools. Immediately after arrival the Chileans received intensive language lessons (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland 1985).

One of my informants, Jorge<sup>2</sup>, and writer Gladys Mejias, whose book is an important source of information, have met representatives of the committee van

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<sup>2</sup> Jorge is not his real name; he is made anonymous on request of the respondent.

Lier be it in two different countries. This committee heard their stories and invited them to the Netherlands. After more than two years in prison Jorge arrived in the Netherlands in the winter of 1976 with help of the committee van Lier.<sup>3</sup> In December 1975 Gladys Mejias (Mejias 2004), after spending eight months in prison, decided to flee Chile with her two sons and a month later they went to Argentina through the Andes. When they arrived in Buenos Aires they slept the first days on a bus station or on squares. Gladys registered her family at the United Nations as a political refugee. The UN shelters were full but Gladys and her two sons did receive a monthly allowance. Later the Dutch committee van Lier invited Gladys to tell her story of her imprisonment, torture and exile (Mejias 2004). Many Chileans fled to neighbouring country Argentina, which at the time of the Chilean coup was not a dictatorship until 1976, among them Gladys Mejias.

Juan Heinsohn Huala also fled with his family to Argentina. After three and a half years his father was released from prison and was reunited with his family. Juan was just a young adult when he and his family fled to Argentina and registered with the UN.

*“Due to all the changes during the coup and dictatorship being an adult was very delicate. The year in a shabby hotel in Buenos Aires was hard because of the large refugee community in that place and every weekend we had to buy our own food; the kitchen hotel was closed. Many people had experienced violence and were traumatized. It was an unpleasant place to stay long. We pressured the refugee organization of the UN to get us to another country. The UN placed us on a list of priorities and the Netherlands was the first country for the first people on the list. After a year in Buenos Aires we got invited by the Dutch queen Juliana to go to the Netherlands”.*

The family Heinsohn Huala came to the Netherlands in February 1979.<sup>4</sup>

Some of my respondents left Chile through the decree that offered political prisoners the choice of serving their prison sentence or going into exile. Because of the harsh conditions in prison this choice was easy. Patricio Aravena spent already five years in prison when he could choose and chose for exile. Patricio gave a small piece of paper with his name and occupation to a priest

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<sup>3</sup> Interview Jorge 2010

<sup>4</sup> Interview Juan Heinsohn Huala 2010

who gave it to the Dutch ambassador in Santiago. After nine months, Patricio received a letter of Queen Juliana who invited him to live in the Netherlands.<sup>5</sup>

The Dutch embassy was, among other western embassies after the coup, a safe haven for many political refugees. There they were safe against Chilean repression and had a chance to receive asylum in the Netherlands. Like many others Boris del Valle Ruiz sought refuge at the Dutch embassy after advice of Dutch priests from who he received education as a child. Boris went to the embassy with a strategy. His sister and her friend went first and walked passed the embassy in short skirts which should derive the Chilean soldiers. That way Boris, who walked behind the women, could safely walk to the embassy and ask for asylum. However, one soldier saw him and wanted to aim his rifle on him but it got stuck between the fancy street tiles which enabled Boris to get into the embassy safe.<sup>6</sup>

Four of the above mentioned informants served a prison sentence before they went into exile. All four experienced horrible conditions which can be read in the next chapter of memory and trauma. Most of them were offered a choice between staying in prison or going into exile. The others felt such a threat of the dictatorship, police and army that they felt they had to go into exile. They too were politically active on the left spectrum and such people were seen as the enemies of the state which meant that they were being oppressed.

### 3.2 Betwixt and between

For an exile, the moment of departure and having to live and adjust in a different country can be traumatic and remains one of the most fundamental experiences in his or her life. For many exiles it is difficult to feel at home in their host countries. It feels for them as having no home at all and it means that they live betwixt and between (Barbour 2007).

Many Chilean political exiles spent their first days or months in a certain hotel on the Prins Hendrikkade in Amsterdam. Patricio and a few more informants, lived in this hotel their first period in the Netherlands. When Patricio Aravena landed on Schiphol Airport he was welcomed by a group of old *compañeros* and was placed in a wheelchair because his legs were damaged. The first days in the Netherlands Patricio spent in a hotel in Amsterdam and afterwards he moved to a flat in the Bijlmer, a suburb of Amsterdam, where a lot

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<sup>5</sup> Interview Patricio Aravena 2010

<sup>6</sup> Interview Boris del Valle Ruiz 2010

of Chilean political refugees were living. They all received Dutch language lessons but that is a difficult language to learn if a person is tortured because such a person's thoughts are still busy coping with such traumas. Patricio worked for two years in the timber business in Lemmer, worked as engineer at Transavia and Martinair and at the ship-building yard ADM.<sup>7</sup>

Two women had difficulties living and adjusting to a new life in the Netherlands. As Barbour (2007) writes, many exiles feel lonely and face depression in their new country. The longing to go back to their country of origin can stay with them for a long time; sometimes their whole lives. Elena Fredes stayed for 1, 5 months in Krimpen a/d IJssel in a centre for asylum seekers. She faced depression and loneliness. Elena remained having a certain feeling of homesickness. In 1987/1988 she tried to return to Chile with her son where she already found a job. However her son did not want to go and in the end she felt fear for the consequences of beginning her life all over. She decided not to go and it made her feel relieved and peaceful after months of tension and doubts. Then her mother died and the rush to go back disappeared.<sup>8</sup>

Gladys Mejias arrived in the Netherlands at the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 1976 and was taken to a hotel at the Prins Hendrikkade in Amsterdam. "I really had to adapt to the cold and grey country with all the same houses and closed faces". After a week they were sent to a centre for asylum seekers in Putten. Gladys mourned about her lost country.

*"It was a strange form of living together in Putten. We had our nationality in common and a history of persecution but no one talked about that. That was too early and painful. I felt sad, cut off from something that was dear to me and needed comfort and physical warmth. Most of my fellow countrymen wanted to go back to Chile but I did not have that urge. I was done with Chile".*

After eight months living in Putten Gladys went to Groningen because there was a Chilean community (Mejias 2004).

Barbour's concept (2007) living 'betwixt and between' comes back in the stories of my informants. Jorge, Patricio and Juan describe it as living in two worlds. All three did try hard to adjust and adapt but still are one part Chilean but also one part Dutch. It was cold when Jorge arrived in the Netherlands but Jorge

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<sup>7</sup> Interview Patricio Aravena 2010

<sup>8</sup> Interview Elena Fredes 2010

was welcomed by social workers of the organization which was established for the intake of Latin American refugees. “I had never difficulty to function in Dutch society. I adapted quite easily”, Jorge explains. “In Chile I always worked with different people from all kinds of backgrounds, regions and classes”. However, Jorge also feels like he lives in two worlds and he has two nationalities.<sup>9</sup> “Moving to Chile for good is not possible”, says Patricio. “I have been too long in the Netherlands. I have one leg in Chile and one leg in the Netherlands”.<sup>10</sup>

Lina explains the first period in the Netherlands as unreal. Exile interrupted her life. “There is a realization that your future, your life project was stopped. I was not passive but a lot of doubts existed. I was in no man’s land. It was a liminal status”. Lina is a cultural anthropologist and that is why she uses this concept. A liminal status is a not accepted or not defined role within a culture. It is part of a transition between two accepted roles. Lina arrived in Schiedam, Rotterdam without illusions. Lina received language lessons of Dutch volunteers who were very hospitable, according to her. Several organizations came by and asked her what she wanted to do as regards to a job or study. She began a study of Anthropology in Amsterdam in September 1974 and worked as teacher assistant at the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation.<sup>11</sup>

For the three women who are of the second generation and who were just children when they came to the Netherlands the exile situation was different. Maiza Campos (1970), daughter of Pedro and Olga Campos, learned the Dutch language fast. She speaks without any accent in contrast to the first generation Chileans. She lived from 1997 until 2003 in the UK and met a ‘real Chilean’ because she says that she is not a real Chilean. “We had nothing in common”, Maiza explains. In Chile she and her sister Paz are called the Dutch nieces. According to Maiza, being different was not a problem because she fitted in everywhere. Maiza has a lot of Spanish talking friends because of the culture and background. She recognizes herself in them. According to Maiza her parents feel less at home here in the Netherlands than Maiza does.<sup>12</sup>

Paz Campos (1968), daughter of Pedro and Olga Campos and sister of Maiza Campos, remembers that living in the hotel in Amsterdam for eight months was not enjoyable. When Paz was still young she felt that she did not belonged here. She felt as a split person. Their family was an attraction in the white

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<sup>9</sup> Interview Jorge 2010

<sup>10</sup> Interview Patricio Aravena 2010

<sup>11</sup> Interview Lina 2010

<sup>12</sup> Interview Maiza Campos 2010



apartment building in The Hague. She felt different. “Now,” she says, “the fact that I am different helps me. I can communicate very well with everyone; I have Chilean warmth, perseverance and a positive view in life”.<sup>13</sup> Paz had more problems of living in two worlds than Maiza had. Maiza is two years younger which made it maybe easier for her to learn the language and to fit in.

In 1977 Rosario Railaf (1966) and her family went into exile to the Netherlands. Rosario experienced a culture shock which was weird, according to Rosario. She has fun memories of their time in Nunspeet where they lived in a bungalow park with nice people. The first period in the Netherlands was difficult because Rosario was used to a whole community. She was distracted and confused and without having a goal. Rosario also missed their dogs and family and it took her a long time to learn Dutch.<sup>14</sup> This might be related to the fact that Rosario already was about ten years old when she arrived in the Netherlands.

It is apparent in these stories that almost every informant has dealt with feeling betwixt and between like living in two worlds. A lot of these families initially did think that they would return to Chile after a few years. When that did not happen they did not give up, as will be explained in the next section.

### 3.3 Active diaspora

Many exiles are politically active, that is often why they were expelled in the first place, and remain like that in their host countries by setting up an active political international diaspora. Such political communities in diaspora emerge out of a critical mass of individuals with a pro-active attitude with a focus on the home country and have a large network of co-nationals (Sznajder & Roniger 2007).

*“Exiles cannot do what most people do; accept their political obligations and loyalties as simple habits. Displaced and uprooted, they must take decisions about what sort of lives they will now lead. As political agents they must at the very least think about these decisions and sort out their various and incompatible duties and ties”* (Shklar cited in Sznajder & Roniger 2007).

Because of the globalization it became easier to keep such a global network of exiles alive by keeping each other informed. In the 1980’s and the 1990’s the global discourse of human rights became apparent which enforced the

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<sup>13</sup> Interview Paz Campos 2010

<sup>14</sup> Interview Rosario Railaf 2010

international mobilization of the subjects of political exiles and human rights (Sznajder & Roniger 2007).

The Chilean exiles in the Netherlands who were the informants for this research have all been, with exception of the two sisters Paz and Maiza Campos of the second generation, political and social active in their new country. Also all of them, except for Paz, Maiza and Rosario, already were active in and member of left political parties in Chile.

Almost every informant was active for the Chile committee and participated in various Chilean events. Juan Heinsohn Huala and his parents started to begin their activism in Amsterdam. It helped to feel at home in the Netherlands, according to Juan. He was already painting in Argentina where he also had an exhibition and immediately started to paint in Amsterdam. Juan made posters and mural paintings for the Chilean political community. From 1981 he began to work at the Salvador Allende Centre as a volunteer, artist and coordinator.<sup>15</sup>

The first ten years in the Netherlands were quite different for the second generation because they were still young and were not involved in politics. The sisters Campos both remember the Chilean events. At the weekends Paz Campos and her family visited Amsterdam to meet Chileans or went to the Salvador Allende Centre in Rotterdam where the kids could follow classes about Chile. She currently does not follow Chilean news about politics.<sup>16</sup> Her sister Maiza remembers the fun evenings at their home with music and a lot of talking about Chile. She explains that their father (Pedro) was very active in politics and solidarity movement and he stopped after ten years. At events for Chile, like a flea market, Maiza would dance for money for Chile.<sup>17</sup>

The situation of Rosario Railaf was different from the sisters Campos despite all forming part of the second generation. The sisters are not active in Chilean solidarity activities but Rosario is. Rosario's father explained everything about his political activism in Chile and Rosario did not find it strange that he had taken up weapons. He stayed active for the Mapuche community and worked for the Chile committee. The Mapuche are one of the indigenous inhabitants of south-central Chile and south-western Argentina. In 1995 Rosario and her brother became active for the Mapuche community; spreading their culture and

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<sup>15</sup> Interview Juan Heinsohn Huala 2010

<sup>16</sup> Interview Paz Campos 2010

<sup>17</sup> Interview Maiza Campos 2010

informing the public without being affiliated to a political party. Unlike many other Chilean groups, the Mapuche continued their struggle and solidarity events after Chile became a democracy because their struggle was not over in Chile. They still are being discriminated against. Rosario's Mapuche identity is very important to her and this manifests itself in the regular contact with other Mapuche, hearing stories, singing, eating, and honouring traditional values like respecting the elders.<sup>18</sup>

The political activism of the parents of the second generation did made an impression on them. They all remember the Chilean solidarity events and the music and discussions in their homes. But only in the case of Rosario it resulted in becoming active herself.

The above mentioned former political refugees have many things in common but their stories also differ. Some fled to Argentina where they sought help at the UN from which they received after some time a visa. Others benefited from decree 504 which forced them to choose between exile and prison. Informants in prison or in Argentina met with committee van Lier. A couple of informants fled to the Dutch embassy in Santiago and received a visa and a letter of invitation of Queen Juliana. Others received help from their partners among which one Dutch man who already had fled to the Netherlands.

Many Chileans lived the first months in a Hotel at the Prins Hendrikkade in Amsterdam after which they moved to the Bijlmer flats also in Amsterdam. Others went to The Hague, Nijmegen, Arnhem, Putten or Rotterdam. Everyone went to work and three of them became politically active for Dutch political parties like the Labour Party (*PvdA*) and the Green Left (*Groen Links*). Others stayed involved in social matters in their work as a social worker and as an organizer of cultural events.

All respondents except for Paz and Maiza, who belong to the second generation, continued their political activism in the Netherlands with their political parties but also for the various Dutch Chilean committees which fought for solidarity with the victims of the military regime and for restoring democracy. The political Chileans had a 'strengthening and politicizing' influence on the committees, according to Hans Beerends (1998). Adapting to life in another country and feeling at home was difficult for everyone because of the weather, language barriers and the different culture. All missed Chile and because the dictatorship was still going on many Chileans became active in supporting the

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<sup>18</sup> Interview Rosario Railaf 2010

solidarity groups for Chile. The Chilean community was large and tight. It was a political community in diaspora. They were a critical mass of individuals with a pro-active attitude. They kept their culture alive with debates, dance groups, dinners, musical events, periodicals and the solidarity movement. The respondents stopped being active for the Chilean solidarity movement in mid 1980's when Chile became a democracy.

### 3.4 The end of the solidarity movement

In the 1980's the solidarity movement grew apart and attention shifted. The former political refugees became grandparents and had careers focus on. The members of the solidarity movement and the various Chilean political parties in the Netherlands also began to have different opinions about the strategies and ideals.

Some men in the Netherlands developed other ideas about strategies and politics than their 'comrades' in Chile who had other experiences with politics. Because of these tensions and because Chile slowly became a democracy the Chileans in the Netherlands stopped being active for these political parties such as Benito and Jorge. Benito had a lot of contact with other Chileans until the democratization of Chile. After 16 years in the Netherlands he returned to Chile and met old comrades of the Socialist Party. But it did not work out. According to Benito "the party had the same manners and plans as in the 1970's namely to fight and start a war against the capitalists. But that did not work in 1973 and it would not work now". Benito attained other ideas and a more balanced world vision.<sup>19</sup> In 1985 Jorge stopped with working for the MIR because it began to fall apart because of different visions and discussions. He explained that it was a very difficult decision but he was already too long in the Netherlands and could not choose for one vision. Jorge says: "I developed myself which weakened the contact with other Chileans".<sup>20</sup> According to Pablo Eppelin the problem with the Chileans was that there was a division between them in their opinions. Those opinions differed about how the left should act in fighting the dictatorship.<sup>21</sup>

In the Chilean solidarity movement a conflict existed also between men and women about politics. The men worked and were politically active and they learned the Dutch language. Women, generally speaking, did not have those

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<sup>19</sup> Interview Benito Sanchez 2010

<sup>20</sup> Interview Jorge 2010

<sup>21</sup> Interview Pablo Eppelin 2010

opportunities, according to Monica Wagener. Therefore a group of women, among them was Monica, organized a congress for women: “We, women, wanted more, we followed the men as their suitcases, and we wanted to think for ourselves, have an education and develop ourselves.” The men were against this congress and stopped it. The following congress was also for men. After that situation Monica stopped being a member of MAPU.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, the strong divisions between the Chileans in the committees caused tension and conflicts. The MIR for example wanted to finance the armed struggle but other parties were against that. On the other hand the United Popular Front thought that the office of the United Popular Front in Havana, Cuba was the only trustworthy way to go. In the Dutch city Eindhoven there even were two committees, one MIR committee and a more moderate group (Beerends 1998). According to Hans Beerends (1998) contact between the first and second group exiles was bad because the first group was seen as deserters and privileged. Many of the second group of exiles had spent time in prison and endured harsh conditions (Hans Beerends 1998). My informants did not speak of these bad relationships. Pablo Eppelin spoke of a rupture in the Chilean community but only due to the political differences and because of these differences they communicate with each other with care.<sup>23</sup>

At the end of the 1970's the Chilean political parties shrunk, were in crisis and did not matter anymore. But from 1984 onwards when the resistance in Chile became stronger the contact between representatives of Chilean political parties in the Netherlands, Dutch Chile committees and Chilean unions improved and increased. The Dutch Chilean solidarity groups preferred the contacts with Chileans in Chile before the Chileans in the Netherlands who according to the solidarity groups still had illusions and got stuck in ideological discussions (Beerends 1998; 87).

Although they ended their activities for Chilean political parties and for the solidarity movement some informants still commemorate Chilean events. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2010 there was a commemoration of the founding of the Chilean Socialist Party, in 1933, in Amsterdam organized by Elena Fredes. Some have moved on and do not want to live in the past. According to Boris, he is no longer a political refugee but became an immigrant after so many years in the Netherlands. “Some people”, says Boris, “think that they stay relevant and

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<sup>22</sup> Interview Monica Wagener 2010

<sup>23</sup> Interview Pablo Eppelin 2010

interesting if they call themselves political refugees, but that is dangerous". Boris does not have this illusion anymore. "Some Chileans in the Netherlands think too much as revolutionaries almost more than they did before the coup", Boris smiles. It is a passed subject for Boris. "What purpose does it have to fight for something that is 16.000 km away from us"? He will not be thinking another 30 years about the old times and thinking of being politically active.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.5 Conclusion

All of my informants found their own way in social, cultural and political activities but stayed true to their ideals. Everybody had difficult periods of adjusting in their new country. They felt different to the Dutch and they felt that they still lived both in Chile and the Netherlands. Due to different ideas on strategy in the Chilean political parties and personal developments many informants shifted their focus and attention onto the Dutch society and their own lives in the Netherlands. Their memories of their experiences during the dictatorship have remained vividly in their minds.

## **4. Memory and trauma of the Chileans in the Netherlands**

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<sup>24</sup> Interview Boris del Valle Ruiz 2010

The concepts of individual and collective memory and cultural and psychological trauma will be analyzed in this section based on the individual memories of my informants of their experiences during the coup and dictatorship in Chile from 1973 onwards. These experiences vary from first hand experienced torture to experiences of feeling threatened or seeing parents with fear. The right wing army and their policies and repression made the informants feel powerless because it destroyed their ideology. For some people the coup did not come as a surprise but it still was perceived as a shock. The consequences of that can be called a cultural trauma. A cultural trauma appears after a major social change which happens abrupt and quick and which is radical and hits deep into society. This social change is forced upon people and comes from the outside. This also happens as a surprise and is unpredicted and unexpected (Sztompka 2000).

This chapter is divided in four paragraphs namely political activists before the coup, traumatic events, torture and remembering.

#### 4.1 Political activists before the coup

After the coup of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1973 repression followed. All of my informants except the persons of the second generation were politically active and had a passion for a socialist, equal and just society with Salvador Allende as their hope. For many Chileans in the first 70 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was normal to be socially and politically active already at high school. In the 1960's and 1970's politics were an important element of social life.

Before the coup the informants were active for various political parties. Elena, Benito and Juan were members of the Socialist Party. Elena Fredes was a social worker and worked in a regional hospital in Santiago. Beside that she was also an active member of the Socialist Party for which she went on political campaigns to inform people and talk about the party's ideology; Elena strived for less social and economic differences, for a just distribution of wealth and equal access to education, housing and work. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September Elena was working outside of the city and heard on the radio about the coup. She immediately went to the meeting place of the party but nobody knew what to do next. She felt powerless. The party bought guns. The next day the army was arresting people and people got fired from their jobs. Elena did not think that she was a suspect but everybody else from her party got arrested. She and her boyfriend fled to Santiago to get asylum in an embassy. But Elena decided that

she had to work the next day and went back. Her boyfriend stayed in Santiago and found refuge in the Dutch embassy and Elena got arrested.<sup>25</sup>

Juan Manque Muñoz was a member of the Elmo Catalan Brigade, they received political lessons and he did volunteer work for the Socialist Youth. The volunteer work constituted out of cleaning irrigation canals in the country, pluck fruits and in the city they went to the slums to distribute products. This was from 1972 until 1973. Juan was politically active from a young age because of his grandparents who told him their life stories and taught him that the rich people abused the law to their advantage which disadvantaged the poor people. Juan is also a Mapuche.<sup>26</sup>

Various informants were active in the MIR in which they had high ranks in certain regions. Jorge was a student economy/accountancy and was chairman of the board of his study and was member of the board of the university on behalf of MIR. Everything was politics in that time, according to Jorge. It started during high school and the whole family of the informant was politically active. Jorge was the head of the MIR of one region and was awaiting a coup. Other political parties were not sure of a coup. The MIR took measures for an armed battle mid 1972. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 7.00 a.m. Jorge heard on the radio that a coup was happening and that airplanes were flying over the Palace Moneda. He went into hiding but the contact within the MIR continued because plans had to be made. The plan was to resist with the different armed groups but it failed because people were afraid to act.<sup>27</sup> Boris del Valle Ruiz was assistant professor in Methodology at the University of Los Angeles, near Concepción, Chile. Boris studied Mathematics. He was active in the leftist student movement and became active as the second man in the MIR of Los Angeles in which he was responsible for the different groups as the FECH (student union), MUI (leftist's university student movement) and the MCR (peasants). On the day of the coup the MIR discussed the situation. They went to the mountains to wait for a counter coup which did not happen.<sup>28</sup>

Two informants worked for the government but had different activities. Patricio Aravena worked for the Allende government as an engineer and Gladys Mejias was more active for the Allende government on street level. Already from her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday Gladys Mejias (2004) was a member of the Communist Party in

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<sup>25</sup> Interview Elena Fredes 2010

<sup>26</sup> Juan Manque Muñoz 2010

<sup>27</sup> Interview Jorge 2010

<sup>28</sup> Interview Boris del Valle Ruiz 2010



Chile but after the birth of her first child Leonardo she became active. Gladys explains in her book that politics in Chile is done at the streets. She went to speeches, handed out pamphlets and walked along with demonstrations. When Allende in 1970 ran for president for the third time, Gladys and many more were busy with painting election slogans on walls, streetlights and bus stops (Mejias 2004). They knew that it was illegal but they did not mind getting arrested. Gladys writes that they were busy writing history. After Allende became president she took part in a literacy campaign which was a fun but tiring job. With support of the government the communists built better houses in the poor neighbourhoods, organized women shelters, committees for the workers and went door to door to win the hearts and minds of the people (Mejias 2004). Patricio Aravena was almost an engineer, two years of study to go, when he began to work for the government of president Allende in 1970. Patricio was in the town of Concepción on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September. Confrontations between the people and the army occurred all over the country, according to Patricio. Because he was an employee of President Allende he knew that he was sought after by the army and that he was in danger. Some time later he got arrested.<sup>29</sup>

More men than women had higher ranks in the political parties. But the women were very active on the street level. Distributing products in the poor neighbourhoods and informing people about the parties programs. Monica Wagener graduated in 1970 as nutritionist and worked for the ministry of family in the Allende government. In 1970 she also became a member of MAPU which was a leftist group which separated itself from the christen-democrats. Monica was also active for MAPU; political lessons, meetings, discussions, manifestations, distributing products to poor people. She felt responsible. Monica says in her own words that she was full of illusions; that they underestimated the oligarchy and the foreign powers. She saw the coup coming with fear. It was a period full of tension. At the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 1973 Monica had a two year old child and the second on the way.<sup>30</sup>

All first generation informants were politically active in Chile which is also the reason that they were arrested and forced into exile. Two of the first generation were active for the MIR and only one informant was active for MAPU. Most informants had been members and were active for the Socialist Party; one for the SP youth and another was working for the Popular Unity government of

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<sup>29</sup> Interview Patricio Aravena 2010

<sup>30</sup> Interview Monica Wagener 2010

president Allende. The coup came as a shock and it is the change that could have resulted in cultural trauma. Political ideals and their personification president Allende were killed which shattered the informant's futures.

#### 4.2 Traumatic events

Some informants have not been arrested nor went to prison. But they did experience some possible traumatic situations. Many houses were raided by police and soldiers when they suspected that leftist activists were living there. Those informants heard about the arrest and murders of their friends in the stadium and there was a threatening atmosphere in which a free life was impossible.

A lot of leftist sympathizers burned their leftist books before the raids like Monica Wagener. Monica and Joop Wagener lived close to the Moneda palace which was being bombed and attacked on the day of the coup. Monica remembers vividly that planes were flying over. There was chaos and shots were fired in the streets. There was also the realization that their dream and project of a new society was shattered. The repression started immediately. Communication was impossible. Monica remembers the sadness, the fear, insecurity and the news hitting them of friends who were shot to death. Through some people they heard that Monica's husband, a Dutch man called Joop, was sought after by the police. He went into hiding and fled to his home country. Monica and her daughter stayed in Chile.<sup>31</sup>

Two days after the coup, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1973, armed policemen surrounded the house of Juan Heinsohn Huala and stormed inside. They searched for guns and other suspect material and arrested Juan's father and older brother. His brother got out of prison after six months but his father was only released after 3, 5 years. It was a day that made a big impression. His father did not want to flee his town immediately after the coup. He thought it was not necessary and asked where he should flee to. He decided to stay. It was his message to other political activists in the city.<sup>32</sup>

The coup and the repression shattered the ideals of the informants which is traumatic at a psychological level. In some circles the refugees and the exiles were seen as cowards. In the article of Noticias (2001) Jeroen Corduwener writes that Boris del Valle Ruiz went through a period of mourning in the days before his

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<sup>31</sup> Interview Monica Wagener 2010

<sup>32</sup> Interview Juan Heinsohn Huala 2010

flight and during it. He believed in his ideals, convinced of the fact that Pinochet would be stopped but that Boris saw his ideals melt away. He did not feel welcome within his own family and to be in hiding in his own country. Boris's decision to go to the embassy was a relief but could also be seen as treason towards his party and himself. "In our political program was written that we would never ask for asylum, never" (Corduener 2001).

The stories of Pablo Eppelin, Paz Campos and Rosario Railaf here below illustrate that if children have observed the fear of their parents it can be traumatic. Paz and Rosario have seen with their own eyes how their parent or parents were treated by the police and army which left also an indelible impression. Pablo Eppelin experienced September 1973 as very chaotic and a grim atmosphere. At his home many leftists found refuge. Relatives and friends of the family got arrested. Pablo explains that his parents looked frightened, vulnerable, paranoid and had arguments. Pablo spoke of his experiences as traumatic.

*"If you see your parents living in fear as a child then that's not a nice feeling. We could not go to school. First, I was a child with imagination which gets washed away, you grow up too fast. It was not a beautiful period, no good memories, a lot of nightmares, being paranoid, and a lot of dreams about being chased after or about police or military, I still have them once in a while. Waking up screaming, being insecure, the fear of my parents; it was traumatic".*

Pablo remembers hearing the gunshots in the streets and helicopters flying over. Sometimes, Pablo informs me; his parents had to make guns disappear for their communist comrades. Those situations Pablo did not understand. There was a complete rupture in their normal family life.<sup>33</sup>

Paz Campos, daughter of Pedro and Olga, remembers that soldiers raided their house in Chile in 1973. She saw the soldiers with their machine guns going down the stairs and she saw her father lying on the ground. Paz says that she does not know which memories are real and which are told to her. Paz tells me that her mother Olga told her that the sparkle in her eyes disappeared after what happened in Chile. When Paz had her children she got the spark back, she says.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Interview Pablo Eppelin

<sup>34</sup> Interview Paz Campos 2010

The days of the coup were frightening for Rosario Railaf due to the many trucks with soldiers and their guns driving into her village. Children and women got separated from their fathers and husbands. Rosario stayed in a barn for two days with locked doors from where she heard men and women scream and cry which was very scary. She wanted to protect her parents. When Rosario got out of the barn she saw people with bloody faces and it was incomprehensible. Her father went into hiding after that and her mother explained that he was sought after. One day there was a big raid with helicopters and the children got questioned by soldiers. Rosario tells me that she still has nightmares about the helicopters. Her father got arrested with a lot of violence after which he disappeared for months. Her little brother got beaten down by soldiers and her mother also got abused terribly which Rosario had to watch. She also saw a lot of corpses in the river.<sup>35</sup>

It is very important to note that trauma can exist with someone who did not experience the event itself but that it happened to a family member or friend (van Dijk 1995).

#### 4.3 Torture

Five informants as well as Gladys Mejias (2004) have been arrested in the aftermath of the coup of 1973. All have been abused and some have been severely tortured which happened on a large scale in Chile during that period. Torture is a horrible experience with far going consequences physically and mentally and many prisoners have endured those.

The following informant is in comparison with the others not severely physically tortured. It was also her rescue that she was taken to a special prison for women which was run by nuns who did not torture. Elena Fredes got arrested by the police who was supported by several soldiers with automatic weapons after which she got transferred to police barracks. She thought she would be free the next day. Instead, Elena was questioned for five months and was blindfolded, tied up, threatened and beaten for three hours during the first day. After the five months she was transferred to a home managed by nuns for women who committed minor criminal actions. The first 10 days Elena sat in isolation. When I asked her about traumatizing events during questioning by police or in prison Elena did not talk about the beating but about certain news she got when she was in the female prison.

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<sup>35</sup> Interview Rosario Railaf 2010

*“I heard crying and noise when I was in the shower when somebody came to see me. Fifteen of my comrades were executed, all familiar to me. We had a tight relationship, had an intensive life together and they were my family. It was the hardest what I had experienced and I think it is incomprehensible”.*

When she told this she had to cry.<sup>36</sup>

Jorge, Benito, Patricio and Juan Manque Muñoz are the informants who were severely tortured in prison or police barracks. Their stories are the stories of thousands of Chileans. They got arrested because they worked for leftist political parties or the Allende government. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> of October Jorge was hiding at different locations. One day Jorge was with a couple of comrades. One of them was a nephew of the lieutenant who was attacking that group with soldiers. They were not all shot to death because the nephew of the lieutenant belonged to Jorge's group. Only one got killed. They were transported to police barracks and Jorge got hanged by his arms and was beaten. He got transported to a bureau of intelligence for questioning for a week. There the torture continued with electro shocks and cigarette burns. Jorge's blindfold kept on moving off his eyes and he saw his abuser who was a captain. Until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February of 1976 Jorge remained in prison. Jorge got tortured in prison; shot in the leg, had broken ribs, a beat up head and cigarette burns.<sup>37</sup>

#### **Patricio Aravena**

The army arrested Patricio Aravena for three accounts; activism, possession of explosives and possession of maps with strategic military goals on them. All of which were false, says Patricio. He was transferred to the prison of Victoria which was a high security facility where Patricio was jailed in the basement in a cold and dark cell. Patricio tells that he was falsely accused and betrayed by his own comrades which was a huge disappointment for him. The 42 days before

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<sup>36</sup> Interview Elena Fredes 2010

<sup>37</sup> Interview Jorge 2010

Patricio was taken to the martial court he was severely tortured. Patricio says that he was beaten with the butt of a rifle against his mouth; he endured, blindfolded most of the time, electric shocks to several parts of his body among others the genitals. Patricio shows me his gunshot scar on his lower leg and explains that he suffers from a bad blood circulation in both of his legs because of being tied up for long period of time. He also did not receive sufficient food in those 42 days and was being frequently interrogated. After the long period of food deprivation, torture, interrogation and persisting his innocence Patricio was told that he had to go to the patio of the prison blindfolded and that he was going to be killed. He sat down at a chair and heard the general shout; 'Aim and fire!' In court Patricio faced his six comrades who betrayed him and one friend who defended him. Patricio explains that he did not have a lawyer and no family visited. In 1973 he was sentenced to 25-35 years in prison. In the five years Patricio was in prison his wife and his kids or other family never visited him.<sup>38</sup>

Osorno, the city where Juan Manque Muñoz was living, was already under siege around the first of August 1973 which meant that the city was already full of soldiers on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September later that year. The several armed groups were shooting people on the streets. Juan tells that they also used dynamite against the poor people. After the 11<sup>th</sup> of September of 1973 all civil servants, government employees and all Mapuche chiefs got arrested and put in jail. There were lists with names of leftist people published in newspapers. Many innocent people were shot to death in the streets, so Juan informs me. "It made me feel powerless and sad". Juan had to hide but continued his resistance but got betrayed and handed in to the DINA, secret service, and he and others were tortured for a month in a concentration camp after which they were transferred to a high security prison.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Interview Patricio Aravena 2010

<sup>39</sup> Juan Manque Muñoz 2010

**Benito Sanchez**

“It was a crazy situation”, according to Benito Sanchez. He hid in several houses and took over the management of the party until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October. He already was being watched by the police and was caught at night. He was brought subsequently to a stadium, military barracks, concentration camp and a prison. Benito was sentenced for 20 years in prison. In prison there were also four brothers of a notorious family that was known for brothels and was respected by the prison director. That was what saved them from more hardship. He was tortured more than three weeks but Benito adds to it that after three days of torture you do not feel it anymore. But the worst memory he has is not about him, Benito explains. He will never forget it. There was a guy from the MIR who got arrested and was brought to the same prison where Benito was. Together with the political books the guy was set on fire in front of Benito and the other political prisoners. He also remembers a situation where he was ordered to stand against a wall with a blindfold to be shot to death but it turned out to be a false execution.<sup>40</sup>

In Gladys Mejias's book *Tomorrow is for me* (2004) she describes her experiences in detail. On a Sunday afternoon in September 1974 a soldier in a red Fiat ordered Gladys to get in the car. She protested because she knew that she was a suspect but was not scared yet. In an unpopulated area they got out of the car and the soldier made her perform oral sex on him. Afterwards he dropped her off in a big house in a desolated area. Gladys came in a room full of people without furniture and with a smell of dried up blood, urine, sweat and human faeces. Now she knew that she was in a *casa de torturas*, a house of torture. After three days she was taken for questioning and was scared and did not know what would happen but the screaming of people of last night was still ringing in her ears. Two soldiers took Gladys in a room full of torture instruments and tied her down on a table. All five soldiers who were present raped her and she felt anger, disgust and tried to free her mind from her body (Mejias 2004). The group rape was always the beginning of each interrogation. Two soldiers interrogated her in cliché ways in which one was being the cruel one and the other was being the understanding soldier. Gladys writes that she could not confess to something because she did not know secret information. Anger and despair were the most apparent emotions. She explains that she existed between reality and delusion

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<sup>40</sup> Interview Benito Sanchez 2010

between being awake and dreaming. Gladys has also been tortured by water boarding and electrocution whereby electrodes were being placed on her nipples. Her nails have also been pulled out (Mejias 2004).

The informants who were tortured have been tortured because of the goals of attaining information, incrimination and intimidation. The army wanted more information about leftist activists and their hideouts and strategy. Many Chilean prisoners were tortured in order to get a confession from them or a statement in which they incriminate others. Through the repression, torture and the forced exile the Chilean dictatorship succeeded in stopping leftist resistance. The informants who were tortured experienced similar torture techniques like beating, blindfolding, electric shocks, cigarette burns, rape and mock executions (Suedfeld 1990). According to Suedfeld (1990) there are four characteristics of torture namely debility, dependency, dread and disorientation. In my interviews the same characteristics came to the fore. The army and police deliberately used torture as a technique to annihilate the left resistance. This is the debility characteristic of torture which means that the captor deliberately induces physical and mental weakness. The second characteristic is dependency and means that the prisoners are brought to believe that their fate is in the hands of the captors which is accomplished by isolation, no support of family and no contact with fellow prisoners. The before mentioned mock executions and physical pain belongs to the dread characteristic which is used to keep the prisoner in a constant state of fear. Many informants were also blindfolded for a long time which belongs to the disorientation characteristic of torture. My informants of the second generation sometimes witnessed the abuse of their parents by soldiers raiding their homes. In some cases the children did not witness these kinds of situations but did witness their parents fear and despair.



Such traumatic events can result in a post-traumatic stress disorder. Traumatic situations described above can lead to high level of stress manifesting in various symptoms. Antze and Lambek (1996) explain PTSD as follows:

*“...the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected death or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other associate”* (Antze & Lambek 1996; 156).

Determining a PTSD will not be in my research however the citation is correct and appears to be true for many informants of mine. Even the ones that did not experience physical harm themselves can be traumatized just by learning about the unexpected death or injury by a family member or friend. Many informants had friends who were tortured, imprisoned and even murdered by the dictatorship.

#### 4.4 Remembering

Memory is generally considered as individually based; it goes on in someone’s own head. Collective memory, however, is defined as recollections of a shared past that are preserved by members of a group that experienced it (Eyerman in Alexander et al 2004). Memory does not exist out of individuals but it is never individual in character. In other words, individuals do the remembering rather than groups but individuals remember only or primarily as members of social groups (Wilson 2005; 232).

The life histories of my informants are written down as individual memories but belong to the collective memory of all Chilean (former) political refugees in the Netherlands. These memories are recollections of a shared past (Eyermann in Alexander 2004). All the first generation informants remember September 11 of 1973 and their experiences during the dictatorship still vividly. It is only 40 years ago when they were in their twenties, very youthful and active. In the first ten years in the Netherlands all informants were active in the Chilean solidarity movement and remembered through their events the dictatorship and its victims.

Elena Fredes explains: “I do not think a lot about this history because it is a long time ago but it is still painful when I think about it. I have accepted it and

have peace. When memories come unexpected then I can be emotional".<sup>41</sup> "I do not think much about my past. Life now is hard enough to be worrying about the past. The 11<sup>th</sup> of September, the first of May or new years remind me about past experiences in Chile".<sup>42</sup> Political events are being commemorated when they are remembered. Elena Fredes organized on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April of 2010 a meeting with former members of the Socialist Party among which Boris del Valle Ruiz, Benito Sanchez and Juan Heinsohn Huala for commemorating the anniversary of the birth of the SP. Elena Fredes explained that she organized this day to talk about the current situation of Chile, political ideas and individual changes. They did not have much contact with each other but they remain good friends, comrades and socialists. They were happy to see each other again.

Collective remembering has multiple functions like fostering social cohesion, to develop and defend social identification, and to justify current attitudes and needs (Pennebaker et al 1997). Maiza Campos, daughter of Pedro and Olga, remembers life at home as very pleasant and cosy because of the music that was being played, they recorded tapes for family in Chile and there was a lot of talk about Chile. She thinks of it as very positive.<sup>43</sup> All informants had such evenings at home or at special events in the Netherlands during the first ten years after the coup whereby the informants talk about Chile and the dictatorship. Such meetings were important to foster the social cohesion and strengthen their Chilean identity. Suppressing memories is a much seen process of collective memory for example in the case of dictatorships which create climates of fear, denial and a forced silence when the subjects are traumatic events as torture or forced disappearances. Those 'silent memories' are often being repressed and forgotten. This can even divide a whole society and smaller communities. The informants did not remember collectively their individual memories of being tortured. More on that subject will be discussed in the next chapter on coping with trauma.

For the second generation it can be different. They were children at the time and many situations have been told to them by family. Sometimes it results in not knowing if they experienced it themselves or if it were told to them. Paz Campos says: "I do not know which memories are real and which are told to me".<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Interview Elena Fredes 2010

<sup>42</sup> Interview Juan Manque Muñoz 2010

<sup>43</sup> Interview Maiza Campos 2010

<sup>44</sup> Interview Paz Campos 2010

#### 4.5 Conclusion

For all the respondents the coup and the chaotic period after the coup have left an indelible footprint in their lives and can be seen as traumatic for several reasons. The first reason is that the coup was unexpected by the most, very violent and it was set up as a major attack with the helicopters, tanks, the bombs and gunshots. Another reason is that the coup made an end to the ideals of the political left of which most respondents were parts of at that time. Furthermore, life as the respondents knew was over. They could not continue with their careers and education because they were seen as suspects by the dictatorship. These reasons can be defined as cultural trauma because the social life and community was damaged. But there was no real cultural trauma, as Erikson (1974) defines it, in the Netherlands inside the Chilean diaspora because the Chileans had a tight knit community. Informants got arrested and spent time in prison in which they were tortured which resulted in psychological trauma. That does not mean that the persons who were not tortured cannot be psychological traumatized. They all remember the period of the coup and the dictatorships and imprisonment vividly. The concept of collective memory is applicable when spoken about the more general history of what happened in Chile however it is often not applicable to the personal and traumatic experiences of the respondents. This is just something that they do not discuss with each other, not even with family. Remembering and also collective memory can help with coping with trauma. In the next chapter there will be more on that subject

## 5. Coping with trauma

In the former sections traumatic experiences came to the fore. In this chapter the problems my informants have or had due to these traumatic experiences and how they cope with these problems will be analyzed. First I will discuss the symptoms and then the coping strategies.

### 5.1 Symptoms

The symptoms of my informants' traumas are the result of their time in prison, torture or the threatening atmosphere in Chile after the coup. Let's not forget that going into exile is traumatic as well. When they lived in the Netherlands the symptoms came to the fore.

The informants who were tortured had and still have physical and mental problems. Only one informant, Jorge, stated that he did not suffer from depression or other mental health issues. The others did. Benito Sanchez describes that he suffered from nightmares for years but now the nightmares only come occasionally. He cannot watch a TV program about prisons without thinking of his traumatic experiences and he suffered from loss of concentration.<sup>45</sup>

For Gladys Mejias (2004) the psychological and physical consequences of the torture were significant. She went in Buenos Aires often to the doctor for medical help. Gladys suffered from gallstones, damaged liver and an infected pancreas. Due to the time in prison and on the streets the teeth of Gladys were loose and the dentist told her that it was better to take them all out. But Gladys did not want that because it reminded her of painful memories. Shaking and sweating Gladys had her teeth fixed. She became depressed after ten years away from Chile. She could not deny the pain. Gladys had also suicidal thoughts. In Chile depression is a luxury she explains. Hearing the last words of Allende on a tape recorder at the memorial of 11 September 1986 of the coup was Gladys' breaking point. She hardly slept and when she slept she had nightmares from which she woke up screaming. Suicidal thoughts were frequent. Gladys writes in her book that the coldness in her was unbearable. This is the moment when she went to a psychologist (Mejias 2004).

When Patricio was just a short time in the Netherlands he suffered from delusions and paranoia. Also recurring nightmares in which military men stood in the doorway of his bedroom were troublesome. Learning the Dutch language was

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<sup>45</sup> Interview Benito Sanchez 2010

too difficult for Patricio because his head was full with the experiences of his time in prison. He tells me that he is a very communicative person and therefore it was hard not being able to communicate with the Dutch people whom he thought were strange. As a result of the torture Patricio was suffering from bad blood circulation in his legs and a bad dental situation for which he needed to see a dentist. In 2005 he went to a dentist because he needed a tooth pulled but Patricio panicked and cried. When Patricio was in prison soldiers punched him in the mouth with the back of a gun repeatedly. He desperately wants new teeth. Such emotions always come back when he sees his marks from the torture on his body in the shower. Patricio also cannot stand shouting.<sup>46</sup>

Other informants mourned about their shattered ideals and futures. Survivors' guilt, which means that survivors of a disaster feel guilty for surviving where others did not, was also an apparent feature of the informants' trauma. When Elena Fredes lived in Krimpen a/d IJssel she got depressed. She went into a mourning stage for everything what happened; her executed comrades, the end of the socialist dream, her lost friends and lost country. She did not eat, shower, sleep and Elena cried a lot. Elena tells me that she wanted to die and that there was tension between her and her boyfriend. She was depressed for three years. According to Elena she endured terrible loneliness. During this period she also had flashbacks to previous times in the Bijlmer flats in Amsterdam where she lived. Feelings of being confused, fearful and of not knowing where she was were frequent.<sup>47</sup>

Also for the second generation nightmares are apparent. In the first ten years Rosario Railaf suffered a lot of nightmares about helicopters and being chased by dogs. She woke up from them all sweaty and tired, restless and confused. She also was very suspicious.<sup>48</sup> Pablo Eppelin had nightmares for years until recently they stopped. A lot of his dreams involved being chased by the police and the army. He would wake up screaming. He was also very insecure.<sup>49</sup>

Van Gennip and Withuis (2008) state that the ideology eroded after being a short period in the Netherlands for many Chileans just as some of my informants experienced. Boris del Valle Ruiz also mentioned that his ideals melted away when he saw that General Pinochet would not leave soon.

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<sup>46</sup> Interview Patricio Aravena 2010

<sup>47</sup> Interview Elena Fredes 2010

<sup>48</sup> Interview Rosario Railaf 2010

<sup>49</sup> Interview Pablo Eppelin 2010

Research shows that when the Chilean political parties in the Netherlands fell apart and when in 1983 the Socialist Party in Chile began to function again the political meetings in the Netherlands failed to have any use. The political identity of the Chilean exiles vanished and was mourned by them (Van Gennip & Withuis 2008). The Dutch organization for refugees did research on Latin American exiles and also concluded that many of them experienced feelings of loss of identity, loneliness and uprootedness (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland 1985).

At the individual level traumatic experiences can result in emotions like anxiety, guilt, shame, humiliation, disgust, and anger. It affects the personal identities of individuals (Alexander et al 2004). Melamed (in Suedfeld 1990; 15) states that victims of torture often have PTSD and among its symptoms are hyper alertness, lack of concentration and memory disturbances. These symptoms concur with the symptoms my informants experienced.

The most common symptom my informants experienced is the nightmare which is followed by the reliving of their traumatic experiences during bathing, watching TV or hearing a helicopter flying over. Depression and paranoia are less common but depression especially is an important and maybe the most serious symptom without trying to trivialize other symptoms. The physical problems like dental problems are less frequent.

## 5.2 Coping strategies

All the informants were young and politically active people and continued their cultural and political activities in the Netherlands. They were not helpless victims. Every victim has agency to cope with their traumas and to start their lives anew, but my informants had a remarkable ability to stay active. Their active lives in the Chilean diaspora community during the first ten years in the Netherlands have contributed to the coping with their traumas. A visit to a psychologist or talking with each other about their traumas was in general non existent. My informants had various coping strategies, which were used intentionally or unintentionally. Also the literature talks about the remarkable ability of the Chilean refugees of not seeing themselves as victims but as political fighters (Van Gennip & Withuis 2008).

Only three female informants of mine went for support to a psychologist or a self-esteem course. In such a macho culture and the old tradition of not talking about your personal problems with strangers this is not very odd. Initially Gladys felt the need to be in contact with the Chilean community. In Groningen the

Chileans tried to talk about the atrocities of the Chilean junta and the torture. However, it did not work out completely. They lacked in comforting each other, and were frustrating each other with gossip, according to Gladys. It was nice to share a language and background but the Chilean contacts were doing Gladys harm and she decided to take some distance. Gladys felt hesitant to talk about problems, which was a Chilean characteristic according to her. But not talking was not the solution. You cannot ignore history, Gladys thought. She wound up at a crisis centre and met with a psychiatrist every day but did not talk. After a day at home she panicked and was admitted in a hospital and there she began to talk and to cry. Gladys talked about her mother, her daughter that was born dead, prison. After a few weeks she felt clean and strong and did not have any suicidal tendencies anymore. Showing her vulnerability made her stronger, Gladys writes in her book (Mejias 2004). In an interview with Noticias (2004) Gladys Mejias tells that her generation of Chileans have the habit of only telling about the fun things. She never told her family about her problems. 'You just want to tell a beautiful story, nobody wants to tell a story about failure.' Writing her life story, about her good and bad sides gave her inner peace.

Second generation Chileans also suffered from trauma. Only one informant went to a psychiatrist. Rosario consciously talked with her father about what happened and why he fought. She was very proud of her father. Their family had a lot of contact with other Mapuche in the Netherlands as well as other Chileans. But that was very different; other background and culture; no understanding between the two. The two communities did have the common goal of helping Chile. The Mapuche had their own vision, did not belong to the left or right which bothered Chileans. They felt abandoned by the other Chileans. Now all that is less present. She went into therapy 20 years ago at a department of the RIAGG in Utrecht specialized in war trauma. She suffered from loss of concentration and had a sleeping disorder. It was an intense therapy of talking, meditation, story telling, going back in time and touching. This helped her to give the trauma a place. She also talks to her boyfriend and friends about it and to people who also experienced a war. But she remains a closed person. "You cannot keep talking about it; you have to keep functioning." Rosario believes it's easier to talk about it with a stranger. The memories of the terrible experiences are still very lucid to Rosario.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Interview Rosario Railaf 2010

Not everyone who sought professional help went to a psychiatrist. In 1990 Monica Wagener had the chance to get into a course about self-esteem, energy and meditation: she cried a lot, she could let everything go, learned to be independent and healed. It was a new start, according to Monica and she could not hide anymore. She learned to accept her life as it is. She put her feelings on hold for a very long time which was a mechanism to stay strong for family and friends. After the class Monica could give the sadness a place.<sup>51</sup>

One informant who was tortured states that he did not had any mental problems and did not speak to a psychologist about his experiences. But he used other strategies which already started in prison. In prison Jorge was conscious of the fact that he had to sleep a lot in order to keep his strength which was his salvage. Jorge mentions that sometime before the coup all MIR members received a book about methods of how to survive in prison like organizing your cell into small parts for eating, sleeping and toilet which is good for the mentality. He says: "Today you can win or lose the fight. Do not complain if you lose. I did not make a problem of it. I accepted the situation. I was thrown out of action but not mentally." He made his strength of his weakness. He says that he is simple and practical. Jorge explains -like Gladys- that according to him many Chileans do not talk about their problems to each other. For Chileans it is just difficult to talk to psychologists, according to Jorge. Some did talk to the social workers.

In 1978 Chilean exiles set up the Social-Psychiatric Service for Latin American refugees (SPD-LAV) where Chilean professionals also worked. This was born out of the recognition that Chileans needed specific care and it became clear that they also needed psychiatric help. However, most of the Chilean exiles came to the centre with physical complaints and for practical support. Chilean therapists discussed the content of their therapy with the leaders of the Chilean political parties in the Netherlands. In their collective culture individual experiences barely got attention. The possible psychological problems stemmed from the social-political context and thus the solution would also be political. This thinking was borne out of a Marxist psychiatric analysis or liberation psychology (Van Gennip & Withuis 2008; 683-684). The above mentioned reason for not speaking to psychologists did not come to the fore with my informants. The machismo culture and the culture of not talking about your problems with strangers were the reasons for my informants not to seek professional help. The

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<sup>51</sup> Interview Monica Wagener 2010



couple of informants who did seek professional help welcomed it and are happy that they did.

### 5.3 Art, study and work

Another way of starting a new life in a different country is through art, study or work. This also helps exiles to participate in the new society and to adjust in their new environment.

Many informants strived towards a positive outlook in life and that was possible for some through their social work. The solidarity in the Netherlands was a big support for Elena. After three years of working as a social worker in Amsterdam she got out the depression. Elena worked with Chileans with similar problems as she experienced and helping people helped her to give the situation a positive spin. She learned to take some distance from her problems and listened to others. She explains that everything has a positive side. Elena tells me that the contact with other Chileans who were members of the SP helped her coping with her problems and integrating in Dutch society. They talk a lot about the Chilean situation, their personal problems and about how they could help Chile when they would return. This helped Elena a lot. She wanted to use her time useful and tried to grow. She became a cleaning lady which brought structure in her life. It also helped her from falling deeper in her depression, Elena explains.<sup>52</sup>

Study, making poetry and painting helped two informants to cope with their new lives and their possible traumas. For Patricio Aravena it was his study of acupuncture which helped him. I asked Patricio if he did not went to a psychiatrist because he had many symptoms derived from the torture. Patricio clearly states that he does not want that, only if the psychiatrist is on the left side of the political spectrum. He did not search for such a psychiatrist because he does not trust psychiatrists and does not want to talk to them. Patricio explains that he received a lot of support of his friends and Dutch girlfriend. He found his own balance. In 1995 Patricio began to study acupuncture and homeopathy through which he found peace and calm. He has his own practice in Mijdrecht in the Netherlands.<sup>53</sup>

Juan Heinsohn Huala is a poet and published a collection of poems in 2009. He explains that his history certainly comes back in his poetry. Since 2000/2001 he

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<sup>52</sup> Interview Elena Fredes 2010

<sup>53</sup> Interview Patricio Aravena 2010

writes in Dutch. One of the big dramas back in the 1980's was the possible return according to him. Many Chileans lived in the Netherlands with their packed suitcases in the hallway. Juan immediately thought it had to be different and let that idea of returning go and live for the full hundred percent in the Netherlands. Juan did that through participating in Dutch society. Participation is for Juan a form of resistance. Juan explains that politics came on the first, second and third place for his father and somewhere below came the family. Juan decided that it had to be different; family on the first place, then politics and then culture. Life in the Netherlands made the Chileans conscious of the fact that life is not only about politics, according to Juan.<sup>54</sup> Four of Juan's poems, written in Dutch, can be read in appendix three of this thesis. The poem *On Sunday* (2009) of Juan I translated into English here below. Writing poems of passed experiences and feelings can help coping with the past by sharing it with others. Making poems sometimes can have outcomes of analyzing problems and it is a way of letting go your past and accepting it.

*On Sunday  
We could visit you*

*We walked through the city  
Warm food in our hands  
And we are proud  
You were a political prisoner*

*On school  
On parent-teacher evening  
We said  
No he cannot come  
He is a political prisoner*

*On graduation day  
You could not be present*

*When you got home  
Three years late  
You were changed  
You were a political prisoner*

*In your eyes  
Exile began*

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<sup>54</sup> Interview Juan Heinsohn Huala 2010

#### 5.4 Collective memory

In the former paragraphs it became clear that my informants did not talk with each other about their personal traumatic experiences. Some even did not talk with professionals. This process of forgetting or not talking is also part of collective memory. But collective memory also constitutes out of commemorating events, commemorating identity or memorial centers.

For some informants it helped to visit a memorial centre. In the first years Monica Wagener commemorated 11<sup>th</sup> September with a lot of activities but nowadays not anymore. She and her husband visited Villa Grimaldi, a former notorious torture centre; according to Monica time stood still, feelings of being lucky in 1973 came over her, the visit touched her deep, intense what happened there, they bought two roses for women who disappeared. She thinks that it is good that Villa Grimaldi is still there. It makes you feel what happened there and that is very important. If it is not there anymore it is like it did not happen, according to Monica Wagener.

Another example of historical memory, as Wilson (2005) describes it, is filing a lawsuit against perpetrators of war crimes. In 1994 Jorge filed a law suit against the captain, then general, who tortured him. Many physical and other tests were done to search for proof. In 2009 the law suit was submitted and Jorge testified in court. Because of broad media coverage through the whole of Latin America many other people came forward who dared to tell their story. In February of 2010 he went again to Chile. He sat next to the general. The general said: "If I am guilty then a lot of persons above me committed the same things." He basically pleaded guilty. It was no civil court but a criminal process. Jorge says he did it for justice but maybe it has been cathartic as well.<sup>55</sup> The personal, autobiographical memory of Jorge expanded through this lawsuit into historical memory substantiated by archives, source documents, objective and factual evidence. This is important for the national collective memory and when justice is finally being done it helps to cope with traumas for the whole nation. Justice is one step to the healing of national or collective traumas experienced in sociopolitical contexts.

To illustrate the importance of not forgetting, I translated a poem called *You Said*, written by Juan Heinsohn Huala (2009) about.

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<sup>55</sup> Interview Jorge 2010

*You said  
Who chooses to forget  
Makes himself an accomplice*

*And I started  
To count all the faces  
Of those who disappeared  
Of those who were murdered  
And tried not to forget anyone  
Not even the broken rib of my father*

These examples of collective memory are supported by the theory of Wilson (2005). He uses the concept of historical memory to explain the concept of collective memory. The following citation will make that clear: “historical memory extends the scope of personal or autobiographical memories by incorporating information about the world that goes beyond one’s own experience” (Wilson 2005; 232). Commemorating identity which was illustrated by the cultural evenings organized by my informants is an example of collective memory. These cultural evenings helped to feel close to each other and to feel at home with each other in their country of exile. The commemoration of the anniversary of the foundation of the SP on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April in 2010 is also an example of how my informants collectively remembered their identity and history which served the purpose of reliving their friendship.

The worldwide success of Chilean author Isabel Allende, who went into exile during the dictatorship, also contributed to the international historical memory on the Chilean dictatorship that exists with people all over the world.

### 5.5 Conclusion

The respondents who spent time in prison and were tortured have experienced physical trauma which manifested itself in broken bones, burn marks, loose teeth, damaged organs and bullet wounds. The psychological trauma manifested itself with the informants in nightmares, paranoia, delusions, loss of concentration, sleeping disorder and depression. Only one of my informants claims that he did not suffer from such things. Also the respondents who did not spend time in prison experienced some psychological problems due to threatening situations in Chile like police raids and stories of friends who got arrested, tortured and imprisoned.

My informants chose several strategies to cope with trauma. One is of course psychological help which two informants chose. Another strategy is

receiving help from a support system like family and friends. Most informants had a nice family here in the Netherlands, one divorced, and their tight family bonds helped them to be positive and be strong. Many informants do not talk about the past much with family members. Talking about traumatic events also is a coping strategy used in psychiatry but also within the community or family. My research data show that not many informants talked about their individual experiences. They did talk with friends about the general situation in Chile. Besides exercise and relaxation, music and art could also be a coping strategy. My informants showed resilience and showed initiative. In the first period in the Netherlands Chileans were active in the solidarity movement and did not take the time to grieve or to be sad. Unintentionally, this activism helped to fight feelings of helplessness and frustration (Van Gennip & Withuis 2008; 678). It did not become clear if my informants really benefited mentally from their activism but it is safe to say that it could have been helpful to share stories and help their fellow countrymen. For one informant filing a lawsuit against his torturer resulted in a feeling of catharsis and contributed to a nationwide process of coping with trauma. Two things that also have helped is the time that has passed, it is forty years ago, and the fact that they have busy lives here in the Netherlands with their children, grandchildren and careers. When Chile became a democracy the Chileans in the Netherlands stopped their solidarity activities and concentrated on their lives in the Netherlands.

## 6. Conclusion

This thesis studied the experiences of the Chileans during the dictatorship through analyzing their memories and traumas. Many of my informants have gone through terrible situations in prison such as torture which have left indelible imprints on them. It was impressive to learn that my informants did not give up but were active in the solidarity movement in the Netherlands right after they arrived. In this conclusion I will answer my central question through answering the research questions and compare the theory about exile, cultural trauma and collective memory with my research findings. My central question is: how do Chilean political refugees of the first and second generation in the Netherlands remember and cope with traumatic incidents which were experienced during the dictatorship in Chile and during their exile?

### 6.1 Exile

Many Chileans fled to the Dutch embassy in Santiago, Chile and asked for asylum and received a visa. Others, who were in prison, got visited by the Dutch governmental committee van Lier and received a visa. Numerous Chileans also fled to neighbouring Argentina and received via the United Nations entry permits for various western countries.

When the Chileans arrived in the Netherlands they were well taken care of and received housing. However, every informant including the ones of the second generation stated that it was like living in two worlds and they were not feeling at home. My research findings concerning exile are consistent with the theory of Barbour (2007). This author mentions the term 'betwixt and between' what means the feeling of living in two worlds which my informants went through. In the first ten years many informants had the longing to return as Barbour (2007) also explains in his article.

Every informant of mine from the first generation continued their political and cultural activism. Only after conflicts arose in the solidarity movement and especially after the end of the dictatorship my informants shifted their focus towards their careers and families in the Netherlands.

As Sznajder and Roniger (2007) and Wright and Oñate (2007) state about exiles my informants continued their political activism and created a tight knit diaspora community and constructed a national community outside Chile in order

to feel at home in the Netherlands. In these cases my research findings are consistent with the theory.

### 6.2 Memory and trauma

Because every informant of the first generation was politically and socially active in Chile before the coup, everybody dealt with shattered ideals and crushed political futures. This can be traumatic. All informants experienced the dramatic events like the bombing of the Moneda palace and hearing and seeing the tanks and army in the streets during the coup. The Chileans of the first and second generation saw how the police and army raided their houses and arrested their family members and heard about friends who got murdered. Five informants experienced torture in prison and in police or army barracks.

Eriksson's (1974) definition of cultural trauma is not applicable to the Chilean exiles in the Netherlands. He explains that the blow to the social life ruptures the bonds between people resulting in the realization that the community is no longer an effective source of support. This is perhaps true in Chile but in the Netherlands the Chilean community bonds were not broken. The torture affected the individual and not to the collective.

Remembering is an important process related to trauma and informants remembered and commemorated special dates and events collectively. The theory on collective memory is also partially connected with my research findings. In line with the theory of Eyerman (2004), Giessen (2004) and Neal (1998) my informants do shape their collective memory through dialogue and this has unified the Chilean group up to a certain point. It is true that my informants remembered collectively but they did not speak about their individual traumatic experiences.

### 6.3 Coping with trauma

The psychological symptoms of my informants are consistent with the theory of Antze and Lambek (1996) and Suedfeld (1990). The symptoms are nightmares, loss of concentration, disillusion, reliving experiences, paranoia and depression. Only two of my informants sought professional help and others found comfort in making art, doing a study, filing lawsuits, visiting memorial centres or in working. Most scholars and psychologists as Suedfeld (1990), Wenzel, Griengle, Stompe, Mirzaei and Kieffer (2000) recommend psychological help after traumatic events such as torture. As my research shows as well as that of Van Gennip en Withuis

(2008) Chileans did not share their personal traumas with each other but the collective cultural and political activities did help them to feel powerful. The scholars above also recommend study, work, making art, doing things collectively after traumatic incidents and in that case the theory supports my research findings.

#### 6.4 Connecting data

With all my research findings I can now answer my central question. The traumas as consequences of the violent events and the traumas as consequences of exile can influence and strengthen each other. In the first decade of their stay in the Netherlands all my informants were part of the tight Chilean community and were active in the solidarity movement. In that community the dictatorship as well as the exile was remembered collectively. The facts and general history especially came to the fore. However, their own personal traumatic experiences were not being discussed collectively due to their culture of not speaking with strangers about feelings. My informants coped with their possible traumas in various ways. Making poems, taking up study and working in social and political professions were such strategies. Only two informants chose for professional help. Without a doubt the active decade spent in the solidarity movement helped many Chileans in the Netherlands on the psychological level.

#### 6.5 Final remarks

It is notable how well the Chilean exiles were taken care of by the government with visa, housing and quick passports. In the present day they would not be helped so fast. The current political exiles or fugitives also come to the Netherlands with traumas and need psychological and social help in order to participate in Dutch society and develop themselves.

I will find it interesting if my research would be done again but then with psychologists by my side. That way we could find out how the informants respond to more psychological questions and research. My research does have some psychological elements but because I do not have any schooling in that field those elements could be further explored. This is the limitation of my research.

Cultural trauma is an interesting concept but it is more applicable in societies where the change, war or conflict has taken place instead of inside an exile community in a different country. I believe also that the concept of collective



memory is a fascinating theory that should be researched more often. However, some scholars have expressed their doubts about the concept. It is a concept that can be found everywhere in societies. Dramatic and historical events should not be forgotten, it must be passed on to the next generation. That is also true for the dictatorship in Chile and that is why I did this research. The guilty men and women should be punished and the victims need to be heard through their testimonies in court houses, documentaries, human rights articles and in scientific research. My informants have shown that they were agents of their own lives instead of passive victims.

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## Appendix 1

Abbreviations and acronyms.

ADM *Amsterdamsche Droogdok Maatschappij* (shipbuilding yard of Amsterdam).

CPN *Communistische Partij Nederland* (Communist Party Netherlands).

DINA *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional*: Directorate of National Intelligence (secret police, Pinochet regime).

FEC *Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile*: University of Chile Student Federation/Union.

MAPU *Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitaria*: Unitary People's Action Movement.

MCR *Movimiento de Campesinos Revolucionarios*: Revolutionary Peasant Movement.

MIR *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*: Movement of the Revolutionary Left.

MUI *Movimiento Universitario Izquierdista*: University Leftist Movement.

RIAGG *Regionale Instelling voor Ambulante Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg*: Regional Organization for Ambulant Mental Healthcare (a Dutch organization).

PTSD: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

PvdA: *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party).

SP: Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista de Chile*, PS).

SPD-LAV *Sociaal-Psychiatrische Dienst voor Latijns Amerikaanse Vluchtelingen*: Social-Psychiatric Service for Latin American Refugees.

UN: United Nations.

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

## Appendix 2

Interview questions.

Personal:

- Age
- Work
- Marital status
- Children

### Theme 1: Memories of dictatorships and state repression.

First Generation:

- What was your age during the dictatorship?
- What was your marital status during that time?
- Where did you live?
- What was your occupation during the dictatorship?
- What did you know at that time about the president and government policy?
- How did you feel about state policy?
- Did you experience state repression yourself and what kind of experiences were they?
- How did you feel at that time about these experiences?
- Did you have family and/or friends who experienced state repression?
- How did you know and what kind of experiences were they?
- Were you or family and friends politically or socially active during the dictatorship?
- How and why were you or family and friends politically or socially active during the dictatorship?
- Do you regularly think about these experiences?
- If so, when and how do you think about these experiences?
- Do you share your memories about that period with family and/or friends in the Netherlands?
- Why and how do you share your memories about that period with family and/or friends in the Netherlands?
- How do you feel now about the dictatorship?

- How do you feel about the exhumations during the democratisation?
- How do you feel about the impunity?
- How do you feel about the persecutions of the guilty?

Second generation:

- How old were you during the dictatorship?
- Where did you live?
- What was your childhood like?
- Were you conscious of the dictatorship?
- What did you know at that time about the dictatorship?
- How were your parents talking about the dictatorship at that time to/with you?
- Was your family politically or socially active during the dictatorship?
- How and why was your family politically or socially active during the dictatorship?
- Do you regularly think about your childhood, growing up during a dictatorship?
- If so, why and how do you remember that period?
- Do you share your memories about that period with family and/or friends in the Netherlands?
- How do you feel now about the dictatorship?
- How do you feel about the exhumations during the democratisation?
- How do you feel about the impunity?
- How do you feel about the persecutions of the guilty?

Theme 2: In exile.

- Why and how did you go into exile?
- Why did you go to the Netherlands?
- How did you feel about leaving your home country?
- In which ways do you miss your country of origin and in which ways you do not miss your home country?
- Why would you go back for good and why not?

Theme 3: Living in the Netherlands.

- Do you remember the first days in the Netherlands and how were those first days?
- How did you get asylum, a house, school and work?
- Did you stay in contact with family and friends in your home country?
- How did that contact made you feel?
- To what extent does having contact with people from Latin America play an important role in your life?
- In what way that contact is being practised and why did you need that contact?
- Why and how are you active in Dutch society?
- In what kind of activities are you active?
- Do you go out often and with what kind of people you go out with?
- In what kind of clubs or organizations are you active?

Theme 4: Trauma.

First generation:

- Which events during the dictatorship have had a deep and strong impact on you?
- How do memories of these events hurt you and what effect does this have on you personally?
- Which memories keep coming back to you?
- Which events or experiences come back in your dreams?
- In what way do the memories and their effect on you developed after time went by?
- How did you cope with such hurtful memories?
- What results does talking about your memories and their effects with persons who experienced the same events have on you personally?
- How does being active in Dutch society help you coping with the effects of the memories of the time of the dictatorship?



Second generation:

- Which events during the dictatorship have had a deep and strong impact on you?
- How do memories of these events hurt you and what effect does this have on you personally?
- How do the memories and their effect on you developed after time went by?
- How did you cope with such hurtful memories?
- What results does talking about your memories and their effects with persons who experienced the same events have on you personally?
- How does being active in Dutch society help you coping with the effects of the memories of the time of the dictatorship?
- Do your parents have difficulty remembering the period of the dictatorship and in what way do they express that?
- How do you feel about the painful memories that your parents have?
- How did and do you cope with the experiences your parents had during the dictatorship?

### Appendix 3

List of informants.

Patricio Aravena	18-03-2010, Amsterdam
Maiza Campos	28-04-2010, Amsterdam
Paz Campos	21-05-2010, Amsterdam
Olga Campos	19-05-2010, Den Haag
Pedro Campos	19-05-2010, Den Haag
Pablo Eppelin	10-03-2010, Amsterdam
Elena Fredes	21-04-2010, Diemen
Juan Heinsohn Huala	09-04-2010, Rotterdam
Jorge	22-0-2010, Amsterdam
Juan Manque Muñoz	03-05-2010, Amsterdam
Lina	20-04-2010, Utrecht
José Pereira	05-03-2010, Capelle a/d IJssel
Rosario Railaf	06-05-2010, Arnhem
Benito Sanchez	20-04-2010, Nijmegen
Carolina Trujillo	03-03-2010, Amsterdam
Boris del Valle Ruiz	20-0-2010, Amsterdam
Monica Wagener	17-05-2010, Overschie

## Appendix 4

Poems of Juan Heinsohn Huala (Verblijf op Papier 2009)

### Toen zij kwamen

toen zij kwamen  
waren wij al twee dagen  
bewijzen aan het verbranden  
  
wie zoekt zijn redding in vuur?  
  
gewapend kwamen ze binnen  
waarom waren ze zo bang  
  
van papier en as?  
  
wat ze zochten  
zochten wij niet

### Je zei

je zei  
*wie kiest voor het vergeten  
maakt zich medeplichtig*  
  
en ik begon  
alle gezichten na te tellen  
die van de vermisten  
die van de vermoorden  
en probeerde niemand over te slaan  
zelfs niet de kapotte rib van mijn vader  
  
je zei  
*misschien zal er nooit gerechtigheid zijn  
maar wat kunnen ze tegen jouw herinneringen?*

### Op zondag

op zondag  
mochten wij op bezoek  
  
we liepen door de stad  
warm eten in onze handen  
en trots  
*je was een politiek gevangene*  
  
op school  
voor de ouderavond  
zeiden wij  
*nee hij kan niet komen*

*hij is een politiek gevangene*

voor de diploma-uitreiking  
mocht je niet aanwezig zijn  
toen je thuis kwam  
drie jaar later  
was je anders  
*je was een politiek gevangene*

in jouw ogen  
was de ballingschap begonnen

Het leven was niet te verbergen

Het leven was niet te verbergen  
de cipiers  
gaven gezichten aan de dood

in hun handen  
liet de huid  
namen en plaatsen los

wat menselijk was  
was gebroken

helden op drift  
sindsdien

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I would like to thank my parents for their financial support for it helped me focus on my research without worrying about financials. My weekly visits to them and my brother, together with my sister, have always been an outlet for me because I can laugh my worries away and talk about what is on my mind.

Another important person for me is my boyfriend Bas. With his relativism and comforting skills I could see the bigger picture and look for solutions. Before the first interviews I was very nervous and a phone call with him made it alright. The weekends with my boyfriend were fun and relaxing breaks from the research.