

The resistance of memories: Biographical accounts of the truncated lives of students and social service professionals who disappeared and were executed during the dictatorship in Chile (1973-1990).

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Paz Valenzuela Rebolledo¹

Paulina Morales Aguilera² and Daniela Aceituno Silva³ have dedicated part of their professional careers reflecting on and promoting human rights. Paulina Morales has published research and works related to this topic since 2004, developing lines related to ethics, democracy, social justice and human dignity. In turn, Paulina participates in the UNESCO Chair of Human Rights Education, a chair that incorporates through research, teaching and extension the exercise of human rights in the classrooms of the Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano (UAHC).

Among the works developed by Paulina Morales that are key to understanding the book to be reviewed is the chapter “Se hace camino al andar... Trabajo Social y Derechos Humanos en Chile: de la atención de casos a la denuncia documentada, 1973-2003”, published in 2010 as part of a book on Histories of Social Work in Chile between 1925-2008. Although this is not the author’s first work on this subject, it is the first publication where she addresses the civil-military dictatorship in Chile and specifically the professional work from the defence of human rights since 1973, recounting with some fragments of testimonies of social workers about their work done in the Pro-Peace Committee and the Vicariate of Solidarity around documented denunciation and attention to cases (Morales, 2010).

¹ Social worker; University of Chile. E-mail: paz.valenzuela@ug.uchile.cl

² Social worker; PhD in Philosophy from the University of Valencia in Spain. E-mail: paumorales@uahurtado.cl

³ Social worker; lecturer at the Catholic University Silva Henríquez (UCSH) and professional at the Metropolitan Regional Headquarters of the National Institute of Human Rights (INDH). E-mail: daceitunos@ucsh.cl



Meanwhile, Daniela Aceituno Silva has worked for more than ten years in the INDH, as a professional for more than seven years in the Education and Promotion of Rights Unit, as well as a specialized professional in the Metropolitan Regional Headquarters for more than three years. Her work experience has been inscribed in the dissemination, education and promotion of human rights in Chile, as well as in the monitoring and follow-up of the fulfilment of rights, being linked to social interventions with vulnerable population.

The book *La Resistencia de las Memorias* adds to a historiographic trend of Chilean social work in permanent development, as well as to the line of construction of memories about human rights and dictatorship in Chile, a field of political deepening that has been persistent from the academy, from civil society organizations, as well as various disciplines, including social work, fighting against the invisibilisation, denial and forgetting of crimes against humanity that occurred in Chile.

Morales and Aceituno (2020) present some of the research on social work and human rights in the context of the Chilean dictatorship that are part of the battery of reflections for the elaboration of this book, which are, for example, the aforementioned book on “Historias de Trabajo Social en Chile 1925-2008. Contribución para nuevos relatos” edited by González (2010); the written experience of social workers who participated in institutions of the Catholic Church in times of dictatorship such as the publications of Victoria Baeza, Norma Muñoz, María Luisa Sepúlveda, and Ximena Taibo (1987) entitled “Trabajo Social, una experiencia solidaria en la promoción y defensa de los derechos humanos”, as well as “La entrevista social en derechos humanos” by Taibo (1987); the books of the Colectivo de Trabajo Social (1990) “Concretar la democracia. Aportes del Trabajo Social” and “Trabajo Social y derechos humanos: compromiso con la dignidad”; as well as other publications that were later developed during the reappearance of institutional democracy such as the book by Eroles (1997) entitled “Los derechos humanos: compromiso ético del trabajo social: Notas para una discusión”; and more recently the works by Cáceres (2015) “De las luchas estudiantiles a las filas de la revolución. History of the MUI at the School of Social Service of the University of Concepción”, “Lights and shadows of Chilean social work. Memoria desde finales de la década de 1950 al 2000” by Aguayo, López and Cornejo (2018) as well as “Las asistentes sociales de la Vicaría de la Solidaridad. A professional history” (1973-1983) by Del Villar (2018).



What does this work come to incorporate into the field of disciplinary memory production? While there is a large number of publications available that have focused on the construction of memories in dictatorship from the repressive events and judicial processes, this book contributes to the reconstruction of the historical memory of social workers and students of Social Service detained and the executed politicians in dictatorship, in relation to their biographical dimensions, alluding mainly to the political, professional and ethical levels of each of the students of Social Service and graduates of the career. This book manages to highlight the human condition of those who were persecuted and executed by the repressive forces of the State, transcending the homogenizing visions on the condition of victim, to focus on their particular lives, constituting new meanings on how they are remembered. In the words of the authors:

“The concern arose to know who they had been in life, how and what they thought, what dreams and desires they had, what political and social participation they developed and how it was possible to rescue the disciplinary vocation located in the difficult context in which they lived.” (Morales and Aceituno, 2020, p.20)

The prologue “Cuántas vidas en una vida” written by Ruth Lizana Ibaceta, director of the School of Social Work of the UCSH, begins with an invitation: memory is the gateway to think and to teach social work, with it we can think of lives in simultaneity, finding many lives in one life; we can look at the young people of the social revolt of 18-O of 2019 and see the young people in times of dictatorship, who were not only young people, but sisters/sisters, daughters/daughters, partners, militants, students of Social Service and social workers.

The introduction tells the story of how the authors constituted this project as an ethical-professional challenge, wanting to rescue the disciplinary vocation within the difficult context of the Chilean dictatorship, with the repression and systematic persecution of the State towards those who defended a transforming leftist project, based on their diverse militancy and positions in the social fabric. In this sense, the authors visualized that, in addition to reconstructing part of the life stories, they should generate pedagogical material for human rights education, due to the fact that the concerns of this book were born in the context of a pedagogical activity with university students, during a visit to Londres 38 in 2017.

The book consists of three main sections: the first, entitled “Preliminary considerations” integrates the first chapter of the book “Memory, human rights and social work. The meanings and convictions behind this book”. The objective of this first chapter is to establish some coordinates on milestones that stressed the socio-political context



before and during the civil-military dictatorship, illustrating at the same time the role of the youth and its correlation with social work, allowing the reader to enter into the socio-political complexities of the time. This first chapter addresses some transversal categories of analysis, such as the problematisation of the homogenizing category of victim, the discussion on the written production of memory from Chilean social work, as well as the exposition of the methodological underpinnings of the research.

The second section of the book is entitled “Individual reviews” and contains chapter 2 entitled “microbiographies” in which reconstructions of the life stories of Social Service students and graduate social workers are presented. In the case of the students, there are seven people between 21 and 35 years of age. Six of them are currently detained as disappeared persons and one has been politically executed. It is noteworthy that five of them forcibly disappeared within the framework of Operation Colombo, included in the so-called “119”, in the framework of the assembly carried out by the National Intelligence Directorate (DINA), under the command of the then Army Major Raúl Eduardo Iturriaga Neumann.

The seven Social Service students are Luis Jorge Almonacid Dumenez (student at the University of Chile (UCH), Temuco campus and MIR militant), Jaquelina del Carmen Binfá Contreras (UCH student and MIR militant), María Teresa Bustillos Cereceda (UCH student and MIR militant), Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich (UCH student, Temuco campus and MIR militant), Juan Ernesto Ibarra Toledo (UCH student and MIR militant), José Alberto Salazar Aguilera (UCH student, Temuco campus and MIR militant) and Gilberto de las Mercedes Victoriano Veloso (Santiago Professional Institute student and PC-FPMR militant).

The nine persons, who at the time of their disappearance or execution were graduate social workers, were between 23 and 34 years old. They are José Ernesto Agurto Arce (MIR), Rolando Gastón Angulo Matamala (MIR), Elizabeth del Carmen Cabrera Balarriz (MIR), Segundo Norton Flores Antivilo (PS), Alfredo Gabriel García Vega (MIR), María Cecilia Labrín Saso (MIR), Elizabeth Mercedes Rekas Urra (MAPU), Julieta Sonia Valencia Huerta (MIR) and Modesta Carolina del Carmen Wiff Sepúlveda (PS).

Chapter 3, “controversial cases”, presents the microbiographies of María Teresa Eltit Contreras, José Fernando Romero Lagos, Susana del Pilar Sánchez Espinoza and Jaime Eugenio López Arellano, problematizing these stories in terms of the construction



of memories and at a methodological level. This is a chapter that was not initially contemplated, but that in the course of the research was configured as a section that precisely makes visible that memories are not abstract or neutral entities, but social practices where multiple versions of events emerge, certain versions are established as true and certain subjects are legitimate; remembering with this, the need to broaden the gaze and incorporate diverse temporalities and subjects of memory (Galaz et al. 2019).

The third section is entitled “Contributions of the research experience for university work in social work”, and includes chapter 4 “Cross-cutting reflections on the research exercise in memory and human rights” which is aimed at deepening the relevance of the work of memories, the value of the testimonies in this subject and the political, formative and social place of researchers in the construction of memories, three axes articulated as three-dimensional memory. Chapter 5 “Pedagogical usability of this material for human rights education” proposes guidelines and pedagogical proposals for using microbiographies in human rights education processes, encouraging trainers, educational communities, students and academics to promote reflections on memory work, which implies “incorporating memories into our work that generates and transforms the social world” (Jelin, 2002, p. 14).

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The contributions of this book in terms of its human, personal and professional value, as well as its methodological and ethical rigor are immeasurable. There is no other book that gathers all the stories associated with the executions or disappearances linked to the Social Service career that has set out to reconstruct the life stories beyond the imprint of State political violence, which ends up determining the identity of the people directly affected, conditioned as victims (Piper, 2005); so it is an undoubted contribution to Chilean historiography on the construction of memories and human rights in dictatorship.

This book is a meticulous artefact, built by the nuance, contrast and assembly of a diversity of resources: primary sources such as written documents, public and private archives, periodical sources (newspapers and magazines), books, theses and articles, reviews of audio-visual material, as well as interviews to relatives, friends and acquaintances of those who have been honoured by being remembered. The ethical rigor and respect with which the research team maintained communication with these families (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4) is also a contribution for those who intend to work on memories based on the construction of testimonies. The ethical-political weighting made by the researchers and their team in deciding, at different



levels, the disposition of the bibliographical sources and the way in which they are presented to those who read them, is also noteworthy.

It is not just another book. It is an encounter with the colleagues who have gone before us; it is an encounter with many lives in one life, which leads us to identify that there is also a translucent value in this encounter: The term three-dimensional memory, coined by the authors, indicates that what is collected in the text are the stories of sixteen people, the stories of the researchers who collected the testimonies and the stories behind each friend or relative who gave their testimony to make this work possible, but also, perhaps, the stories of those who read it. Students, professionals, academics of Social Work can find their own stories, desires and convictions in these microbiographies.

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