
STUDY

Translated by John Bell

THE YEARS OF SHOOTINGS AND TORTURE (1973-1975): THE LAST DAYS OF MIGUEL ENRIQUEZ

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This article recounts the last days of Miguel Enriquez Espinosa, leader of the MIR (the Movement of the Revolutionary Left). The narrative puts the accent on the strategies used by the DINA (the National Intelligence Directorate) to trace his whereabouts. At the same time it intends to dispel several doubts about the confrontation in calle Santa Fe (Santa Fe street), Santiago, where Enriquez was shot down in October 1974, a little more than a year after the installation of the military regime that overthrew Allende.

Calle Santa Fe, in the municipality of San Miguel, situated in the south-west sector of Santiago, Saturday October 5th 1974 at 13.00 hours. Two vehicles, with one woman and three men inside, stop at a corner and park. The girl stays with the pick-ups, alert, her eyes scanning the horizon. Three men get out: by their gestures, the way they walk and the guns they are carrying one can see that they are security agents. And they are. They belong to squads Falcon One and Falcon Two of the Caupolicán Group of the DINA (the National Intelligence Directorate).¹

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¹ Intelligence organism of the military regime. Created by decree law in June 1974.

They walk along slowly observing the houses, one staying at the corner, the other two approaching the children who are playing on the pavement. A small boy makes a gesture with his nose, indicating the sky blue house with the number 725 outside. "Let's go take a look", says the leader, who has impenetrable blue eyes and light coloured hair.

The agents walk up to the house to verify who lives there. One of them goes up to ring the bell. Immediately he falls to the ground, pushing the lieutenant down as he does so, when shots are fired from a window. The calibre 7.62 bullets pass over their heads. They have escaped by inches. The officer takes cover behind a post and returns fire while the other man runs off to find a telephone and alert the central barracks of the DINA.

Thus begins the confrontation in which Miguel Enriquez Espinosa, the Secretary General of the MIR (the Movement of the Revolutionary Left), dies.²

Very soon dozens of armed agents begin to surround the sky blue house on Santa Fe street in Santiago. A few minutes later it would be impossible to get out of there. And so, on that spring afternoon when Miguel Enriquez fired the first shots from his AKS rifle, he sealed his own fate: he would not emerge from there alive.³

Thirty years after his death in that shoot out, this article intends to reconstruct the last moments of the leader of the MIR. The accent is placed on the methods that allowed the DINA agents to find the safe house where he and his female companion were hiding.

The first section mentions some aspects of the development of the MIR during its illegal stage, which began in 1973; the second analyses the methodology employed by the DINA to get near Miguel Enriquez' hiding place. The third explains the way in which the intelligence apparatus went about causing casualties among the MIR and the final part relates the confrontation in which the leader of the movement was shot down.

We should like to point out to the reader that names in commas are the tags used by members of the MIR: those names that appear in commas and italics have been invented to protect some of the identities. All the interviews quoted, with real names, are in the hands of the author.

² Politico-military organisation formed in 1965.

³ Luz Arce, who was a member of the Partido Socialista (Socialist Party) and later collaborated with the DINA, confirmed that on numerous occasions their agents told her that they were not going to capture Miguel Enriquez: they were simply going to kill him.

1. The MIR refuses to ask for political asylum

Towards the end of the government of Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-1970), the MIR was "...a small clandestine group, with an organic existence in some provinces, a precarious foothold in the movement of the masses, fundamentally in some student and working class sectors, with a short history, after a recent split (June 1969),⁴ and counting on cadres that were mainly young and recently incorporated into political life".⁵

The MIR had to go underground after making an "example"⁶ of the journalist Hernan Osses Santa Maria in the city of Concepcion and undertaking a series of bank robberies or "retrievals" as they called them. The College of Journalists brought an action against those responsible for the attack. The Court of Appeals in Concepcion, presided over by Jose Canovas Robles,⁷ agreed the plea and named Hector Roncagliolo Dosque as visiting judge. He ordered a search of the premises of the Federation of Students of Concepcion (the FEC) and of Central House (Hogar Central), where the students in residence lived, both places found within the confines of the University.⁸ He also gave orders for the detention of various leaders of the organisation. So, with its leadership being hunted, the group had no alternative but to go underground.

At this stage they could count on support from the then Senator Salvador Allende⁹ and from the Green Berets (parachutists and Special

⁴ In June 1969, a group of Miristas (members of the MIR), led by Rafael Ruiz ("el Rafa") left the party and created the Manuel Rodriguez Movement 2 (MR-2). The group only lasted a short time since it was totally put out of action by the police after a failed assault on a wages van at the Portofino supermarket. The incident occurred on August 25th 1969. The university students Jorge Silva Luvecce, Juan Martinez Briceño and Sergio Perez Molina were detained. (Arancibia Clavel, Patricia y otros: *Los Hechos de Violencia en Chile: Del Discurso a la Accion*, 2003, p.163).

⁵ Political Committee of the MIR "La Tactica del MIR en el Actual Periodo" (December 1973), 1998, pages 297-298.

⁶ The expression in commas is the one used by Andres Pascal Allende (Secretary General of the MIR from 1974-1985). Andres Pascal in an interview with the author in Havana, August 1999.

⁷ This judge became famous in 1985 when he investigated the decapitating of three Communists (Parada, Nattino and Guerrero). The investigation forced the Director General of Police, Cesar Mendoza Duran, to resign.

⁸ See Avendaño, Daniel and Mauricio Palma: *El Rebelde de la Burguesia. La Historia de Miguel Enriquez*. (The Bourgeois Rebel. The Story of Miguel Enriquez). 2001, pages 92-93.

⁹ Carmen Castillo Echeverria relates how, for New Year, Salvador Allende got hold of a house so that Miguel Enriquez, his brother Edgardo (Pollo, "Simon" being his name in the underground) and Bautista van Schouwen (Bauchi), with their respective husbands and wives and children, could have parties. The house belonged to Miriam Contreras (Payita). See Echeverria, Monica and Carmen Castillo: *Santiago-Paris: El Vuelo de la Memoria*. (Santiago-Paris: The Flight of Memory). 2002, page 118.

Forces from the Army) who hid them in the military installations at Peldehue.¹⁰

This period ended a short time after Allende became President, when he managed to free those whom he called “young idealists”¹¹, through pardons being granted and cases being waived. That period underground was, however, not exactly risky, because even when the police detained various militants and several of them claimed that they had been subjected to torture, if that indeed had happened, it was not done systematically. Three years later the situation would be completely different and that experience of being “illegal” would not be of much use.

¹⁰ Testimony of Andres Pascal Allende (Secretary General of the MIR 1974-1985). Interviewed by the author in Havana, August 1999.

Among the soldiers, the Army officer Mario Melo Pradenas stood out: in 1970 he was expelled from the Army, together with other soldiers, for holding Marxist views. Later on he joined President Allende's security team, known as the GAP. After the 1973 coup, he was detained by a patrol of the FACH (the Chilean Airforce). He was seen for the last time in the military camp at Peldehue. The last version regarding his death was that he was thrown out of a helicopter so that all the new members of the Parachute and Special Forces School could see what would happen to traitors to the “patria”. It was both an example and a warning.

As regards the participation of ex paratroopers in the GAP, one can see Perez, Cristian “*Salvador Allende. Apuntes sobre su Dispositivo de Seguridad: El Grupo de Amigos Personales (GAP)*” (Salvador Allende. Notes on his Security Team: the Group of Personal Friends—the GAP). 2000

¹¹ On the 11th of November 1970, the recently inaugurated government of Salvador Allende sent documents to the Courts of Justice, waiving cases that were being processed for infringing the Internal Security Law of the State (la Ley de Seguridad Interior del Estado). Among those who benefited were Mauricio Cruz Diaz, Nelson Gutierrez, Luciano Cruz Aguayo, Miguel Enriquez Espinosa, Jose Bordas Paz, Arturo Villabella,. See Gonzalez Pino, Miguel and Arturo Fontaine Talavera: *Los Mil Dias de Allende* (The Thousand Days of Allende), 1997, Volume 1, page 39.

“..I uphold the fact that it is my responsibility for having signed these decrees and pardons so that these young men and women could once again be incorporated fully into daily life. It is certain that some of them committed crimes that could not simply be thought of as political, but they committed them on the basis of a serious ideological conviction. And other countries and other peoples, and indeed Chile itself, also use the means of a pardon before a sentence so as to obtain a feeling of pacification throughout the country. This is what I want. The incorporation of these young idealists into the constructive task of helping the country is justification enough: it is for this reason that I have sought pardons for them, signed these decrees and accepted the responsibility for having done so.

In the same way we are studying an amnesty project for other sectors, who have not received either pardons or decrees. By doing this we want to openly demonstrate our desires to settle the country down and dedicate itself to making efforts that are both constructive and creative. To carry out these efforts I fundamentally demand your co-operation”. Allende, Salvador: “Discurso en el Congreso del Partido Socialista (La Serena, Enero de 1971)”: en Farias, Victor (comp.) *La Izquierda Chilena (1969-1973)*, 2000 Tomo 1, p. 634. (Speech to the Socialist Party Congress, La Serena, January 1971 in Farias, Victor: *The Chilean Left (1969-1973)*, 2000, Volume 1, page 634).

The intention of the President was to pacify and diminish the intense political struggle that had been developing for years in Chile and to permit these young people to participate in the development of the country. Several of those who benefited became members of his personal guard (GAP).

During the administration of the Unidad Popular, the MIR collaborated with the President's security team, known as the GAP. Max Marambio, a well known member of the MIR who knew about such matters, was in charge of the group for a long time. As the Unidad Popular continued in power, the differences in political strategy between the MIR and the government became more evident. As a result of these disagreements, the MIR was expelled from the GAP.¹² In August 1973, the leadership of the MIR accused Salvador Allende of having capitulated.¹³ On the morning of Tuesday September 11th 1973, Miguel Enriquez joined up with Socialist and Communists at the Indumet factory to try and defend the government. He told them that by four in the afternoon he could put 400 men from his Central Military apparatus (the Fuerza Central) on a war footing, fifty of whom had full combat training. "Fifty men for the deployment of a strategy to keep the UP safe?", as Patricio Quiroga wrote somewhat ironically.¹⁴ In short, the MIR was in no condition to offer battle to the Armed Forces, and it didn't.

At dusk the same day (with Allende dead and the Armed Forces in control of the country), the Political Committee of the MIR ordered "...its forces to withdraw and to carry out only actions of harassment. With a part of our leadership surrounded militarily and the rest isolated and their communications interrupted, and with the masses (who were our fundamental military force) passive and in retreat, as if we had all been infected by cholera and a feeling of impotence, objective conditions forced us to withdraw and this we did with our operative units and our central military apparatus."¹⁵ In the beginning of a period when the Chilean Left was in decline, the leadership of the MIR ordered its members not to fight battles but to go underground. They intended to maintain the centralised structures (which were those that depended on the Central Committee), the functioning of the Politico-Military Groups (the GPM's) and the ties with the nuclei in the provinces.

¹² See Perez, Cristian: "Historia del MIR: Si Quieren Guerra, Guerra Tendran..." (History of the MIR: if they want war, they'll get it....), 2003

¹³ "The government has capitulated. The masses can only rely on their own forces" (editorial in *El Rebelde*, No 95, August 14th 1973). "It's time to call a spade a spade so as not to continue fooling the working class and the people, never again. The Government has capitulated significantly, and this is the truth. The Government has not been strengthened: in truth it's only the bourgeois State that has been strengthened, the power of the bosses". In Farias, Victor (comp): *La Izquierda Chilena (1969-1973)*, (The Chilean Left (1969-1973), 2000, Volume VI, pages 4976-4977.

¹⁴ Quiroga, Patricio: *Compañeros. El GAP: La Escolta de Allende* (Compañeros. The GAP: Allende's Escort), 2001, pages 152-153.

¹⁵ Political Committee of the MIR: "La Tactica del MIR en el Actual Periodo" (The Mir's Tactics at the Present Time"), December 1973. In *Miguel Enriquez. Con Vista a la Esperanza* (Miguel Enriquez. With a View to Hope), 1998, page 305.

The intention of the MIR was to oppose, with all force possible, the “thuggish dictatorship”, as they called it. In the words of the Political Committee “In Chile we see a thuggish dictatorship with a fascist core, which is trying, not without a certain degree of difficulty, to incorporate businesses and the petit-bourgeoisie into a Corporate State”.¹⁶

The strategic objective of the MIR was maintained. It was “to create a social force that could begin a revolutionary war, and, from this, construct a people’s revolutionary army, capable of overthrowing the military dictatorship, taking power for the workers and installing a revolutionary government of workers and peasants, which would complete the tasks of the proletarian revolution”.¹⁷ And for the period 1973-1974 the tactical goal was “...to strengthen and toughen up the party, create a social revolutionary force and give birth to a people’s revolutionary army. Through this to destroy the dictatorship and seize power”.¹⁸ As we can see, the MIR kept the goals with which it had been born: it seems that they failed to understand that the political situation had suffered an abrupt change, that in this new stage the organisation had to develop its activities under a dictatorial regime, which controlled and persecuted any hint of dissent, and that to oppose it could mean both torture and death.

In September 1973, Miguel Enriquez was living in an olive green house in the Gran Avenida Jose Miguel Carrera in Santiago. Also living there was his “compañera” Carmen Castillo Echeverría (Catita, “Jimena” being her underground name), the children Camila Pascal (daughter of Catita and Andres Pascal) and Javiera Enriquez Pizarro (Miguel’s daughter), Humberto Sotomayor (Tito, “Tonio”), his wife Marisa and their children. Moreover, Humberto Sotomayor’s mother (“Grandmother”) also lived there. She was an absolutely trustworthy militant, who also took on the role of domestic servant on numerous occasions.

On the 11th of September 1973, the Military Junta released Proclamation No. 10, which, among other things, ordered the members of the Political Committee of the MIR to present themselves at 16.30 hours at the Ministry of Defence. Those summoned were: Miguel Enriquez, Humberto Sotomayor, Bautista van Schouwen, Andres Pascal Allende, Nelson Gutierrez, Edgardo Enriquez, Roberto Moreno and Arturo Villabella.¹⁹ Not one of them went at the appointed time or during the days that followed.

¹⁶ Political Committee of the MIR: “La Tactica del MIR en el Actual Periodo”, December 1973 (The Mir’s Tactics at the Present Time”), 1998, page 309.

¹⁷ Ibidem, page 321

¹⁸ Ibidem, page 321

¹⁹ See Avendaño, Daniel and Mauricio Palma “*El Rebelde de la Burguesia: La Historia de Miguel Enriquez*” (The Bourgeois Rebel: The History of Miguel Enriquez), page 189.

With the country totally under the control of the Armed Forces, the situation for the militants of the MIR was radically different. Carmen Castillo was forced to alter her appearance. To do this, she got rid of her jeans and the clothes that bore the hallmark of her Leftist past, and began to use skirts, changing the colour of her hair and behaving as though she was a woman who sided with the new authorities. Meanwhile Miguel cut his moustache and curled his hair. He transformed himself into a travelling salesman. The job justified his frequent departures from the house to the neighbours and it didn't seem strange that occasionally he never returned to sleep there.

The "Grandmother" took charge of the housework and maintained the necessary contact with the people in the area. In other words, Miguel Enriquez, Carmen Castillo and the children converted themselves into a normal middle class family.

The situation of the Secretary-General was shared by all the members who held some sort of responsibility within the party structures. They had to "construct the party and function under strict measures of security and in secrecy, always taking care of the distribution of everything, the necessity of putting on a front and finding an alibi for every activity, and to be constantly putting together infrastructures for themselves and for those who are being hunted and organising the systematic teaching of all the cadres in new ways of working underground, understanding that the work is, by necessity, slow and difficult but ultimately secure".²⁰ To sum up, all the members of the MIR had to modify their life styles so as to work efficiently and survive from the moment they became illegal.

Party life suffered an enormous mutation: gone were the days of marches led by portraits of Che Guevara, where they used to wear helmets and berets, and of meetings with lots of coffee and cigarettes, where, for hours, they used to debate the political situation, the strategic development of the party and the global march of socialism. Now there were meetings of one or two members in a car which drove for hours in streets far removed from the centre or they got together in an apartment that had been chosen especially for this purpose or they limited themselves to exchanging information through a series of go-betweens or mailboxes.

At the beginning of December 1973, Miguel and his family moved to a sky blue house, No. 75, in Santa Fe Street, in the borough of San

²⁰ The Political Committee of the MIR: "La Tactica del MIR en el Actual Periodo" (The MIR's Tactics at the Present Time, December 1973), 1998, page 328.

Miguel. It was here where the confrontation took place that cost the General Secretary his life.

After the military coup, many members of parties on the Left, with or without authorisation from their respective leaderships, turned up at embassies and consulates asking for political asylum, because they felt that their lives were in danger. Confronted with the dismemberment of these organisations, the leadership of the MIR decided that they would not seek asylum, since the main fight against the dictatorship was within the country.

From this arose the war cry, which was also a signal of defiance to the military regime: “The MIR won’t ask for political asylum”. The group stayed in Chile to resist. In its own words: “ Nobody can stay away from the struggle. It is because of this, and not for any petty party advantage over others, that the MIR has been and is against asylum or exile for its leaders and members. My party has sent overseas the number of cadres strictly necessary to be trained for the work on this front, with the obligation of returning to the country once they have complied with their mission. Therefore the very few members of the MIR who have made their own decision and left the country can only have their membership restored on their return to Chile”.²¹

Definitely, the only members of the MIR were those who stayed in Chile. This policy translated itself into the fact that many cadres, who could not count on the infrastructure necessary to function under the new conditions, ran a high risk of falling into the hands of the state security organisations. It could have been too high a price to pay.

And it was, because in practice it meant that a percentage of the members with the greatest responsibilities were captured, assassinated and made to disappear.²² It was a mistake caused by a failure to re-evaluate the

²¹ Declarations of Edgardo Enriquez (“Simon”), member of the Political Committee of the MIR at a press conference in Havana, Cuba, June 26th 1974.

“Simon” was the brother of Miguel and was sent abroad by him to lead the search for support for the MIR. In 1975 he was detained in Argentina by secret agents from that country. As part of Operation Condor, he was sent to Chile and handed over to the DINA. He was taken into detention and disappeared.

Luz Arce confirms that she saw a cable sent from Argentina to the DINA. “The document came from an Argentine intelligence service, affiliated to the Condor group, and advised the DINA about the detention of a Chilean citizen, Edgardo Enriquez Espinosa, brother of Miguel, whom they would place at the disposition of the DINA”. See Arce, Luz: *Viaje por el Infierno* (Journey through Hell), 1993, page 255.

²² Patricio Rivas (“Gaspar”), an important leader of the organisation at the time in Santiago, confirms that almost 80% of the leaders of the cadres and 10% of the membership perished during the dictatorship. Patricio Rivas (member of the Central Committee of the MIR), in an interview with the author, Santiago June 1999.

conditions the organisation had for confronting the dictatorship. The failure has to be understood in the context of those days of shootings and torture, in which the only thing, according to the MIR, was not to stop fighting.

Ten years later, in the plenary session of the Central Committee in 1984, the group made an evaluation, indicating that “The refusal to go into exile arose as a policy of principles. This policy of the MIR had great importance for the moral force it signified a time when the Left was disbanding and the revolutionaries were proposing to stand by the people and fight alongside them.....Nevertheless we made the mistake of taking the policy to extremes and raising a tactical measure to the quality of a principle.

With time it seems it would have been more correct to have implemented a more selective strategy: to have withdrawn a part of leadership overseas and maintained the rest in Chile, and do the same with the cadres and the members who were being hunted down, keeping only those who could legally live in the country and a nucleus of illegal cadres, in such a way as not to overload the Party with cadres that were constantly under threat. What happened showed that the great number of illegals placed an enormous burden on the Party, made going underground difficult but the repressive actions of the dictatorship easier and led to the loss of many of the cadres who were imprisoned and assassinated. In spite of our policy against it, in fact hundreds of our members withdrew into exile either through their own decision or being forced to do so by events”.²³

The implementation of this policy produced several disagreements within the organisation, since there were members who advocated the fact that in certain circumstances members of the MIR could go into exile. This was the opinion of Victor Toro (“Melinka”), a member of the Central Committee and founder of the MIR.²⁴

And so it was this tactic of rejecting exile that the MIR implemented and elevated to a guiding principle, which was one of the elements that allowed the men of the DINA to find Miguel Enriquez’ hiding place. Because, following the MIR’s line, it made it unthinkable that the Secretary General of the Party would abandon Chile and seek refuge in another country, from where he could continue leading the group. The

²³ Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR-Chile). *Resoluciones Pleno Extraordinario del Comité Central, Enero 1984* (Resolutions of the Extraordinary Plenary Session of the Central Committee, January 1984), page 8.

²⁴ Victor Toro (“Melinka”) (member of the Central Committee of the MIR) in an interview with the author, New York, April 1999.

DINA would have found it difficult to trap him abroad and if they had, the repercussions would surely have been different.²⁵

2. The National Intelligence Directorate (DINA): the hunt for Miguel Enriquez and the MIR.

After the military coup, the repression against Unidad Popular supporters was massive. The Armed Forces carried out raids everywhere to capture the greatest possible number of opponents to the new regime.²⁶ This archaic and decentralised procedure did not permit the military to destroy the structures of the Marxist parties, since to do so required an organisation that could apply adequate intelligence methods.

From the first moment, the person who distinguished himself in the hunting down of supporters of the Left was the commander of the Tejas Verdes Regiment (near San Antonio), Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, a colonel of Engineers and a teacher in the Intelligence School. He gained the confidence of Augusto Pinochet when he designed an intelligence apparatus to put clandestine Marxist groups out of action, which was organised in November 1973 as the DINA and made official by Decree No. 521, on June 14th 1974. We are talking about a military organisation with a professional and technical character, depending directly on the Military Junta, and whose mission consisted of “gathering together all information on a nation-wide basis, coming from different fields of action, with the idea of producing the intelligence required for the formulation of policies, plans and the adoption of measures to safeguard national security and the development of the country”.²⁷ Several articles in the decree, that were published confidentially, allowed the organisation to search premises and detain people without a judicial warrant.

The team was made up of members of the Armed Forces, police and detectives and some civilians.

²⁵ The clandestine operations of the DINA to eliminate opposition overseas were harshly criticised by democratic sectors throughout the world. The principal operations were the assassination of the ex Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Armed Forces, Carlos Prats Gonzalez, and his wife in Buenos Aires (September 30th 1974), the attempt against Bernardo Leighton Guzman and his wife in Rome (October 16th 1975) and the assassination of Orlando Letelier del Solar and his secretary in Washington D.C. (September 21st 1976).

²⁶ During this time some people simply took advantage of the situation to settle accounts with rivals, by accusing them of being supporters of the Unidad Popular and hiding arms or subversive literature in their houses.

²⁷ Extract from Supreme Decree No 521. See, Comision Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliacion: “Informe de la Comision Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliacion” (The Report from the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation), 1991

With financial resources, enormous power and a close relationship between its director and General Pinochet²⁸ they were ready to launch themselves against the underground structures of the Chilean Left, and especially against Miguel Enríquez and the MIR.

In their “crusade”, the DINA put into practice the strategy used in the fight against politico-military organisations that was articulated in clandestine cells or anti-subversive warfare. The strategy had been designed by French Intelligence experts after the conflict in Indo-China in the 50’s and during the Algerian War at the beginning of 1960.²⁹

The methods for carrying out this type of war began to be known to the Chilean Armed Forces towards the end of the 1960’s. These came mainly from the Uruguayan military, who had gained vast experience in their fight against the National Liberation Movement, the Tupamaros, (MLN-T)³⁰, which it had been fighting since 1968. For the way in which they formed their cells and their use of urban guerrilla tactics, the MIR bore a certain resemblance to the Tupamaros. After the military coup of September 1973, agents of the DINA also received training in Brazil, as Manuel Contreras confirmed when replying to a question as to whether he knew General Aussaresses: “I don’t know him, but I sent a lot of Chilean officers to be trained in Manaus (Brazil). Every two months I sent him a new contingent of officers to be trained over there. He usually worked at the Secret Service headquarters but he used to travel to Manaus for the training”.³¹ In this statement of the DINA’s director we have the proof that

²⁸ This close relationship showed itself in the fact that every morning the director of DINA went to the office of the President of the Military Junta to hand him a daily intelligence report. See Zalaquett, Cherie: “Manuel Contreras, “Pinochet nos Dejo Absolutamente Solos” (Manuel Contreras :“(Pinochet left us completely alone”)), 2004.

²⁹ The war in Algeria began in 1954, when the Algerian National Liberation Front rose up against the French colonial authorities. The conflict extended to 1962, when the President of France, Charles de Gaulle, withdrew his forces and granted independence to the country. The best testimony to the conflict is the film “*The Battle of Algiers*” (1965), an Italian-Algerian production, which faithfully reproduces the methods used by French troops during the struggle.

³⁰ The National Liberation Movement-Tupamaros (MLN-T), a politico-military organisation with socialist tendencies, arose in 1966. Its leader was the lawyer and legal assessor for the sugar unions, Raul Sendic. Organised in secret cells that were made up of independent columns with their own back up, they carried out operations supplying munitions and armed propaganda, especially in the cities. Among their principal actions were the assassination of the United States CIA agent, Dan Mitrione, two escapes from the Punta Carretas prison, the kidnapping of an English diplomat and taking over the city of Pando. From 1968 onwards the government of Jorge Pacheco Areco used the Armed Forces to fight them, thus initiating the anti-subversive war in Uruguay. The organisation was totally broken up by the beginning of the 1970’s. At the beginning of the 21st Century the survivors of the group became part of the Popular Participation Movement (MMP), which forms part of the leftist Uruguayan Broad Front (Frente Amplio).

³¹ Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, founder and head of the DINA. In Robin, Marie-Monique: “*Escuadrones de la Muerte: La Escuela Francesa*” (Death Squads: the French School), documentary video (Paris, 2003).

officers of that organisation used to travel to Brazil to be trained in anti subversive activities.

The strategy created by the French officers radically changed the way of making war, since the enemy was no longer presenting itself as a foreign army of occupation but as civilians of the same nationality who were organised in cells and acting underground. Because of this there were no defined limits as to the theatre of war and it extended to all regions in the country. On the other hand these members of the underground used no uniforms, badges or particular distinguishing marks and therefore, according to the concepts of anti-subversive warfare, they were not fighters recognised by the Geneva Convention³². Thus, when the security forces captured them, they were not considered prisoners of war and could be assassinated or made to disappear.

For greater clarity regarding this point, it is worth looking at the analysis given by General Manuel Contreras, the founder and leader of the DINA:

“...the concept of *prisoners of war* in no way relates to those people who were arrested and sent to detention camps in our country during the war against subversion (the “Dirty War”) from 1973 to 1977.

Those detained in Chile do not comply with any of the requirements established to determine if one is dealing with a prisoner of war, since:

- a) They are not members of any Armed Forces’ combat unit
- b) They might be considered members of resistance movements but *they absolutely fail to comply with the conditions imposed by the Geneva Convention* in order that a person may be considered a prisoner of war:
 - They have no chief or commander who is a person responsible for his subordinates and heads the movement.
 - They are subversive guerrillas who only act in the shadows of the night, secretly, attacking without any risk to themselves and without wearing anything distinctive, as it is important for them not to be recognised
 - They carry their weapons hidden and not only as the Convention requires
 - At no time do they comply with the rules and customs of War during their operations. On the contrary, their subversive action is one of *criminal subversives*, for they also attack defenceless citizens”.³³

³² The Geneva Convention was signed between the 21st of April and the 12th of August 1949: among other things, it dealt with “The Treatment of Prisoners of War”. Chile ratified the Convention on the 5th of December 1950.

³³ Contreras Sepulveda, Manuel: *La Verdad Historica 11. Desaparecidos?* (The Historical Truth II: The Disappeared?), 2001, page 23. The parts in italics were put there by Manuel Contreras.

The director of the DINA thinks that the members of the MIR (the *Miristas*) are nothing more than subversive criminals because, among other things, they have no recognised commander. Thus making members of the movement disappear or torturing them was not a punishable crime under the rules of war. However the MIR had a leader, who was Miguel Enriquez, and therefore should have been considered as a politico-military organisation and its members treated according to the Geneva Convention. The DINA had the obligation to apply the status of prisoners of war to them: this meant that they could not be tortured or made to disappear. As we shall see later on, none of these conditions were fulfilled in the hunting down of Miguel Enriquez and his organisation.

One of the fundamental aspects in the idea of anti-subversive warfare is to get information to locate and annihilate the members of politico-military groups.

The DINA achieved this task with the use of torture: they also counted on the collaboration of several members who deserted or who broke when they were being beaten.³⁴

Torture is defined as “...any act in which pain or serious suffering is intentionally inflicted on a person, be it physical or mental, for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, or punishing him for an act he or a third person have committed or are suspected of having committed, or of intimidating or coercing this person or others or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by a public official or any person acting in a public capacity, at their instigation or with their consent or acquiescence. It does not include pain or suffering arising from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.”³⁵

To apply torture is one of the most repudiated actions in modern societies, mainly because it degrades men and women, making them lose their condition as persons. A lot of the time the consequences of this practice are permanent, i.e. they are not erased by the passage of time. For this reason it is considered such an enormous crime that there is no legal principle referring to it in modern judicature.

³⁴ The best known collaborators with the DINA were Marcia Merino (“*Flaca Alejandra*”) and Luz Arce. Both of them broke under torture and later worked as agents for the organisation.

³⁵ Office of the High Commission for Human Rights. “Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment”. Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and adhesion by the General Assembly in their Resolution 39/46, December 10th 1984. Came into force June 26th 1987, in accordance with Article 27. See: www.Unchr.ch/english.

In courses on anti-subversive warfare, French instructors used to explain the usefulness of the “electric prod”, known in Chile as the “parilla” or grill. From that moment on it was adopted for use in torture sessions. It was an efficiently terrifying method. “When they took a prisoner, they generally convinced him to talk. The majority did. Those who didn’t were subjected to physical suffering, unending, which made them talk in the end.....if another prisoner was present at the torture session, it convinced them to talk too because they knew what was coming”.³⁶ In synthesis, it was practically impossible, if not suicidal, to resist torture.

Together with the specific application of the “parilla”, they created a strategy that we could call one of dissuasion or fear. It aimed to communicate to the Miristas the treatment they would receive if they were detained. This created a psychosis with regards to the effects and possibilities of resisting beatings.³⁷ The very fact of knowing that in secret barracks you could be tortured, maybe to death, made several people talk before it happened to them.

Those members of the MIR taken by the DINA during those days of shootings and torture had a hood placed over their eyes to stop them from seeing and were later moved to a secret prison.³⁸ There from the first moment there they were subjected to an inhuman regime: they received blows from feet and fists, their hours of sleep were changed or they were not allowed to sleep at all so that they lost all sense of time, they were stopped from going to the bathroom or from eating, several were repeatedly raped, even by dogs that had been especially trained for the purpose. They were then taken to the “parilla” which was nothing more than the application of electric shocks to the most sensitive parts of the body: the treatment was accompanied by lengthy and draining sessions of interrogation during which they were asked about their activities and position in the infrastructure of the group, about the name or pseudonym of their comrades, the location of their houses and arms depots and finally the whereabouts of Miguel Enriquez and other leaders.

³⁶ Account of Colonel Carl Bernard, student of Paul Aussaresses in Fort Bragg (base of the US Special Forces), in Robin, Marie-Monique: “*Escuadrones de la Muerte. La Escuela Francesa*” (Death Squads. The French School), documentary video (Paris, 2003).

³⁷ The same thing was done by those in charge of the Naval Mechanics School, the principal detention centre for members of the Montoneros in Argentina. Interview with “Sergio Berrios”, ex Argentine Navy policeman, Buenos Aires, April 2004

³⁸ The most important detention centres that the DINA used were: Jose Domingo Cañas (the Ollague Barracks), Londres 38, the Villa Grimaldi and La Venda Sexi. For a detailed account of these centres see Tamayo, Tania and Claudia Lagos “*Arquitectura de Espanto: Casas de Tortura y Centros de Detencion*” (The Architecture of Horror: Torture Houses and Detention Centres), 2003.

The leadership of the MIR was convinced that torture could be resisted: because of this they issued precise instructions that if a member was beaten and handed over information that allowed other members of the organisation to be captured or became a collaborator “his name would be given out to all the members, the rest of the Left and to revolutionary movements world wide. (And they warned that) they reserved the right to apply the hardest sanctions and methods, whose tenor would be in accordance with the level of development of the struggle”.³⁹

According to the French General Paul Aussaresses, the most important of those who spread the ideas of anti subversive warfare in Chile, under Pinochet’s government, applied the same methods that were used during the Algerian war.⁴⁰

With these antecedents, it becomes clear that the strategies used by the DINA to hunt down Miguel Enriquez and his organisation were the same as those designed by French intelligence to combat groups formed in clandestine cells or trained in anti subversive warfare.

By using these methods the DINA agents began reconstructing the structure of the MIR in their archives. Slowly but surely, as members of the group kept falling into their hands, the DINA was closing in on Miguel Enriquez. Thus with members of the MIR in the sights of hundreds of security agents, the final hour was drawing closer.

3. The first casualties in the MIR

Immediately after the military coup of September 1973, the MIR suffered losses in its middle levels: the most significant was the fall of the Regional Leadership of Valdivia. In this city, on the 3rd and the 4th of October, a war council condemned 12 people to death. Among those shot were Fernando Krauss Iturra, the regional secretary and Jose Gregorio Liendo Vera (“Comandante Pepe”), leader of the revolutionary Peasants Movement (MCR).⁴¹

But the first important blow to the MIR occurred on the 13th of December 1973.. That day, from a church in the centre of Santiago where they had taken refuge, Bautista von Schouwen (Bauchi), a member of the

³⁹ Political Committee of the MIR: “A Fortalecer Nuestro Partido” (“To Strengthen Our Party”, Santiago, June 16th 1974), 1998, page 338.

⁴⁰ See Iglesias, Juan Pablo: “Paul Aussaresses: In Chile they used the same methods that were used in the Algerian war”, 2003.

⁴¹ See the Report from National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation: “Informe de la Comision Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliacion”, 1991.

Political Committee and director of *El Rebelde* (The Rebel)⁴² and Patricio Munita (“James”), his bodyguard, were arrested.⁴³

The leadership of the MIR knew of the arrest but did not know where Bauchi and “James” were being held captive. They were also unaware that after suffering atrocious tortures, both were assassinated the day following their detention (December 14th). Because of this the leadership declared “we render our emotional homage to comrade Bautista van Schouwen Vasey, doctor, 30 years of age, one son, member of the Political Committee of the MIR: dead or alive, hero of the Chilean Resistance. He resisted torture from the four Intelligence services of the Chilean thug who took a sadistic pleasure in his sufferings, lacerating him with savage tortures, in spite of which this comrade limited himself to giving his name and insulting the torturers.

Three times he was taken in a coma to Military Hospital and he still didn’t break from the torture. Up to now Pinochet and his lackeys have denied recognising that they detained him or that they have already assassinated him. But if there exists the slightest possibility that Van Schouwen is alive we call on public opinion throughout the world to redouble their denunciation of this situation so as to avoid comrade Van Schouwen from being shot or subjected to atrocious tortures. And if he has already been shot then we ask the whole world to demand that the Military Junta display the body and recognise that he was assassinated in the regime’s torture chambers”.⁴⁴

Nancy Guzman maintains that Miguel Enriquez, with the aim of forcing the dictatorship to divulge the whereabouts of Bauchi so as to mount a rescue operation with his Special Forces and, at the same time, to raise the morale of the members, carried out an intelligence operation. In fact he sent false information regarding the whereabouts of Bauchi overseas so that it would be carried by cable agencies and turn up again in Chile.⁴⁵

⁴² *El Rebelde* was the MIR’s newspaper. It never failed to come out, even in the worst days of the movement. At one stage, when the group could no longer count on a printer, it came out in manuscript form and photocopied.

⁴³ Guzman, Nancy: *Un Grito desde el Silencio. Detención, Asesinato y Desaparición de Bautista van Schouwen y Patricio Munita* (A Cry from the Silence. The Detention, Assassination and Disappearance of Bautista van Schouwen and Patricio Munita), 1998

⁴⁴ Declarations of Edgardo Enriquez (“Simon”) in “Edgardo Enriquez’ Press Conference”, 1974.

⁴⁵ See Guzman, Nancy: *Un Grito desde el Silencio. Detencion, Asesinato y Desaparicion de Bautista van Schouwen y Patricio Munita* (A Cry from the Silence. The Detention, Assassination and Disappearance of Bautista van Schouwen and Patricio Munita), 1998.

At the same time he published a truncated photo of Van Schouwen, showing him to be alive but in very bad physical condition, in a hospital. This operation resulted as being highly credible for members of the Left. Thus for example, Javier de la Fuente, member of the Socialist Party of Valparaíso, who was also in hiding at this time, was convinced that Bauchi had disappeared from the Naval Hospital of Valparaíso because he had seen the photo.⁴⁶

Using Van Schouwen as an example, Miguel Enriquez edited a document that showed the behaviour he expected from members of the MIR when faced with interrogations and torture. The Secretary General confirmed that Bauchi “was cruelly tortured for weeks and months without saying anything, responding to the torture, as comrades who were being tortured in neighbouring cells testify, by insulting the torturers and with cries as to the certainty of victory for the workers and peasants revolution, and we still don’t know for sure if he’s alive or dead”.⁴⁷

We share Nancy Guzman’s idea in the sense that Miguel Enriquez’ intention was to get the security services to disclose the place where Bauchi was being held so as to try and rescue him. We should like to add that it was possible that agents from the DINA did not get him to reveal the whereabouts of Miguel and, fearful of a rescue attempt, they murdered him and hid the fact.

In spite of this enormous loss, by March 1974 Miguel Enriquez had undertaken the restructuring of the MIR at every level (from the Political Committee to the provincial nuclei). In Santiago the process was faster and in the regions slightly slower.

At the end of the month the organisation suffered its first series of casualties. These were caused by the Intelligence Service of the Chilean Airforce (SIFA). On the 27th of March they detained a member of the Political Committee and another from the Central Committee.⁴⁸ On the 29th other leaders fell into their hands. From then on the spiral never stopped. In the middle of April the SIFA captured Victor Toro (“Melinka”).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Javier de la Fuente (a leader of the Socialist Party). Interview with the author in Putaendo, Chile, March 1999.

⁴⁷ Political Committee of the MIR: “A Fortalecer Nuestro Partido” (“To Strengthen Our Party”, Santiago, June 16th 1974), 1998, page 337.

⁴⁸ One of those captured was Arturo Villabella, engineer, member of the Political Committee and responsible for the military structures of the movement. While resisting arrest he received 7 bullets.

⁴⁹ Other important people who were detained included: Roberto Moreno (“Pelado”), member of the Political Committee, in charge of the re-organisation of the MIR in the provinces, Luis Retamal (“Reta”) and Patricio Rivas (“Gaspar”).

The SIFA kept these men captive for months in the Academy of Air Warfare (AGA), where they were subjected to torture and other cruel treatment.⁵⁰

With various members of the Political and Central Committees in detention, the SIFA estimated that the conditions were right to negotiate with the MIR. This “would consist of an exchange of the prisoners who were being held at that moment in the AGA for the MIR’s weapons. The bridge for this conversation would be constructed via Laura Allende (sister of Salvador Allende) and Monsignor Carlos Camus”.⁵¹ The idea was to end the group’s resistance and put one over on their rivals in the DINA. In other words, the SIFA-DINA fight corresponded, in the intelligence field, to the fight for power between Augusto Pinochet and Gustavo Leigh.⁵²

The initiative never prospered thanks to opposition from Miguel Enriquez and the members of the MIR detained in the AGA, among them Arturo Villabella, Roberto Moreno and others. But the confirmation of who was detained there and the tenor of the negotiations between Laura Allende and the Bishop of Linares made it possible for those who were detained to leave the country a short while later. Perhaps this was the last chance for Miguel Enriquez to save his own life. Nevertheless the very idea of capitulation, even though it was transitory, was unthinkable for him.

In the light of these events the fight between the intelligence services to destroy the MIR intensified, as we can see by the fact that the DINA kidnapped “El Barba” Schneider, the ex-Mirista who was working for the SIFA.

In the middle of 1974, the Socialist and Communist Parties, badly beaten down by the repression, were scarcely surviving: they lacked any capacity to carry out public expressions of dissent. Within this framework the only problem that the government faced in order to consolidate its policy of national pacification was the opposition of the MIR, even though it was more verbal than practical. So, for the security forces the objective was clear: they had to destroy the MIR and the best way of doing it was to capture or assassinate Miguel Enriquez. Who was going to do it, the DINA or the SIFA?

⁵⁰ Declarations of Victor Toro (member of the Central Committee of the MIR). Interviewed by the author in New York, April 1999.

⁵¹ This account is from the MIR member Leonardo Schneider (“El Barba”) who collaborated with the Intelligence Service of the Airforce (the SIFA). In Camus, Maria Eugenia: “Las Confesiones de Schneider, “El Barba” (The Confessions of Schneider, “El Barba”), 2002.

⁵² In Kustcher Wach, Annie: “Los Contactos del MIR con La Fuerza Aerea” (“The Contacts of the MIR with the Airforce”), 1999.

4. The final hour⁵³

It was the DINA agents who dealt the devastating blows to the main structures of the MIR and it was in the Spring of 1974 when they began to tighten the noose around the Secretary General that would end in his death.

On the 21st of September 1974, “Fatman” Romo, Troglo and “Flaca Alejandra” (an old member of the MIR who was now collaborating with the DINA) went out to “trawl”⁵⁴ the streets of Santiago in search of a Mirista.

Quite by chance they came across Lumi Videla (la “Negra”, “Luisa”), an old leader from the Teacher Training College (the Pedagógico) and companion of Sergio Perez (“Chico”) and they immediately took her into custody. Sergio and Lumi were responsible for the organisational part of the movement, in charge of maintaining links with the regional structures.

“La Negra” was interrogated and atrociously tortured for hours but she refused to divulge the place where she lived, hoping that it would soon be 10 p.m., the time when her companion would have to leave the house in the light of the agreement they had made.⁵⁵ Sergio Perez did so, taking documents with him that contained details of appointments with contacts and the whereabouts of an arms cache. Inexplicably, however, in the morning of the following day, he convinced “Tonio” to come with him and return to the house, without knowing that the address had finally been divulged by Lumi Videla. The DINA had left several agents there in case anyone should come. “Chico” carried a 38 calibre pistol and a hand grenade. On entering the house the agents immediately opened fire, wounded him in the leg and took him prisoner. “Tonio”, on hearing the shots, instead of trying to rescue his companion, left the place and went off

⁵³ This section is based mainly on the following sources: Carmen Castillo E, *Un Día de Octubre en Santiago (One October's Day in Santiago)*, 1987; Carvallo, Mauricio: “Miguel Krassnoff Martchenko: “Comparto el nunca mas de Cheyre” (“I agree with Cheyre’s “never again”); “En enfrentamiento con la policía muere el profugo Miguel Enríquez” (“The fugitive Miguel Enríquez dies in a confrontation with the police”) from headline in the *La Tercera* newspaper (Sunday October 6th 1974); “El MIR traslado su directiva a París” (The MIR moves its leadership to Paris), from Assoc.Press quoted in *La Segunda* newspaper October 7th 1974, page 15; Avendaño, Daniel and Mauricio Palma, *El Rebelde de la Burguesía: La Historia de Miguel Enríquez (The Bourgeois Rebel: the Story of Miguel Enríquez)*, 2001; and interviews already quoted with Robnerto Moreno, Patricio Rivas and Andres Pascal Allende.

⁵⁴ To “trawl” (“porotear”) was an action carried out by the DINA. It consisted of getting an ex-member of the MIR to walk around the streets in the hope of encountering a present member of the organisation.

⁵⁵ They had agreed that if one of them had not arrived by 10p.m. without explaining the delay, it meant that he or she had been taken by the DINA. It was a pact for their mutual protection.

to tell Miguel Enriquez. Together with “Tonio”, he went back to the house where “Chico” had been made prisoner with the aim of getting him away from the DINA. They never made their objective, however, as they found the area controlled by the security forces.

Sergio Perez and Lumi Videla (“Lumi”)⁵⁶ both died as a result of the tortures inflicted on them, without telling of Miguel’s whereabouts, maybe because they actually did not know it. It is possible that “La Negra” tried to negotiate with the DINA: maybe she tried to make them believe that she would collaborate with them in order to gain time and stay alive, and when the agents discovered the deception they tortured her to death. This is the version of Luz Arce, who shared these days with her in the detention centre in Jose Domingo Cañas⁵⁷.

A short time after Sergio Perez was taken, Miguel met up with his contacts so as to take steps and avoid the breaking off of relations with the provinces, which would lead to disaster, and he asked them to leave the house where they were living because “Chico” knew it. They refused and decided to stay there, secure that Chico would never betray its whereabouts. Mistake.

In the early morning a group of agents arrived at the house where the contacts were living and detained three of them, as well as finding papers and documents with details of rendezvous.

How did the DINA know where Sergio Perez’ contacts were living? A mystery. But we believe that it was not “Chico” (Sergio Perez) who told them since he died under torture simply because he refused to collaborate with his interrogators. Whatever the case, the DINA found themselves each time closing in a little nearer on Miguel Enriquez.

A few days later, “Sonia” a contact of “Jimena” (Carmen Castillo) was detained. “Sonia”, under the threat that her children would be tortured, disclosed the place where “Jimena” could be found in the case of an emergency contact. The spot was a bus stop near the Estadio Nacional (National Stadium).

With this information the men of the DINA prepared an ambush to detain “Jimena” when she arrived at the place. But this time it wasn’t her who turned up but Miguel and Tito. Both of them were heavily armed and a short but intense exchange of shots followed: the Miristas broke out of the trap and escaped. This episode happened on Friday October 4th, one

⁵⁶ In the first days of November of that year her body was thrown into the patio of the Italian Embassy in Santiago, with a message that said “This is the only way for members of the MIR to get asylum”. The government press had talked about a Mirista orgy inside the embassy, something that was strongly denied by the Italian authorities.

⁵⁷ Arce, Luz: *Viaje por el Infierno (Journey through Hell)*, 1993

day before the final battle. The DINA was only 24 hours away from successfully concluding their hunt.

Who divulged the location of the house where Miguel Enriquez was living? No member of the MIR did. If that is the case then how did the DINA come by the information?

The exact location of the house where the head of the MIR lived was not disclosed by members of the group, among other factors because few of them knew where it was. Nevertheless, in the interrogations that had been carried out, as we have seen above, and while being brutally tortured, several members had disclosed fragments of data that bore no relation to each other when analysed separately but began to make sense when analysed and studied as a whole. For example, the DINA discovered that “Jimena” (Carmen Castillo) was pregnant, that she drove around in an old Renault, and that the house where she lived was in the municipality of San Miguel: perhaps they also knew the colour of the house. Thus they restricted the search area to a few kilometres in the south of Santiago.

But they never had the exact location. Because how was it that to carry out the capture of most important and dangerous underground leader in Chile, who was supposed to be guarded by various heavily armed men, they arrived in only two cars with four agents? If the leadership of the DINA had been so sure that Miguel Enriquez was to be found inside that house, they would have thrown a net of hundreds of men around the place and none of the four inside would have had the opportunity to escape.⁵⁸

To sum up, the agents of the DINA, after analysing fragments of information obtained under torture, obtained a location relatively near the actual hiding place of Miguel Enriquez but not the exact one.

At the beginning of October 1974, events began to speed up. On Friday the 4th Miguel returned home accompanied by Jose Bordas (“Coño Molina, probably, at that time responsible for the Central Military apparatus or Fuerza Central of the MIR)⁵⁹, for increased fire power, given

⁵⁸ An example that confirms our suspicions was the operation known as Fuenteovejuna. In the morning of September 7th 1983, a numerous group of agents divided into various platoons surrounded the house No. 1330 in Fuenteovejuna street and placed a jeep with a .50 machine gun in the front of it. The machine gun opened fire immediately and killed Arturo Villabella (“Coño Aguilar”), member of the Political Committee of the MIR and head of its military apparatus, and his bodyguard. Nobody had the chance to escape. See, Perez, Cristian: “Historia del MIR: Si Quieren Guerra, Guerra Tendran” (“If they want a war, they’ll get one”), page 39.

⁵⁹ For the Central Military apparatus of the MIR (Fuerza Central), see Perez, Cristian: “Historia del MIR: “Si Quieren Guerra, Guerra Tendran” (If they want a war, they’ll get one), 2003.

We believe that the military structure of the MIR was headed by Arturo Villabella (member of the Political Committee and in charge of the military structures). He was followed

the extreme danger of the moment. Remember that on this same day Miguel and “Tonio” had a shoot out near the National Stadium.

That night four people stayed at the house in Santa Fe street: Miguel and Catita had been joined by Tito and “Coño Molina”. The day had been both tense and nerve wracking: they watched television until late.

Saturday October 5th began as a normal day. The neighbourhood seemed quiet. Miguel and his companions went out early in a white Fiat 125, to carry out their usual tasks (contacting people, having meetings, making checks etc) and Carmen Castillo stayed at home cooking and tidying the house, alert to whatever noises came from the street.

Around 1 p.m. the three men arrived. It seems that they had no idea that they were being followed at a certain distance by a police patrol car. The detectives believed that one of the occupants in the car in which Miguel and his people were travelling was the author of a recent robbery at the Bank of Chile.⁶⁰

The Miristas rapidly put the car away in the garage and entered the house looking for documents and guns. They told Catita to bring their things as they were leaving since there were men from the DINA patrolling the street.

She got ready to leave. While they prepared their departure, “Tonio” kept watch from a window. “They’ve just gone by” he said. He was referring to the agents of the DINA and not to the detectives, because these were probably waiting for reinforcements and they had not yet arrived outside the house.

Suddenly, near the front door, they heard noises made by Lieutenant Miguel Krassnoff Martchenko and an N.C.O. who were coming to find out who the people were that lived in the house, since one of the children had pointed the place out and also because several of the neighbours had told them that every night they heard people typing. Moreover they also pointed out that one of the men was an invalid because he never got out of the car in the street. Up to that moment this was all that those agents who were approaching the house of Miguel Enriquez knew, only suspicions. They had no idea that the man they were pursuing was watching them from a window and had a rifle and various grenades in his hands.

by Mario Esdpinoza (“Juancho”) in charge of the national force, Luis Carrasco (“Quila”) in charge of the Central Military apparatus and Aldo Flores (“Felipe”), his second in command.

⁶⁰ The police were carrying a picture of one of the bank robbers whose appearance was very similar to Miguel Enriquez (see the article “The fugitive Miguel Enriquez dies in a confrontation with the police” from the *La Tercera* newspaper, Sunday October 6th 1947, page 42.

Given the high level of tension of the MIR's leader, it was not surprising that he loaded his model AKS Avtomat Kalashnikov Karabin⁶¹ and "squeezed the trigger and opened fire on them"⁶², before finding out exactly who the people were approaching his house or trying some delaying tactic. Thus it was the unmistakable sound of this weapon being loaded that put the DINA agents on the alert. On hearing the sound they threw themselves to the floor, while the shots passed over their bodies. A second's difference had saved their lives.

That was the last chance that Miguel Enriquez had to escape, since in minutes a force bent on his annihilation had surrounded the house. Missing with his shots had left him no option to get out.

Meanwhile Catita had picked up the Scorpio sub-machine gun, run towards a window and also opened fire. What were "Tonio" and "Coño Molina" doing? Firing? From the roof Jose Bordas fired a rocket from a Soviet made rocket launcher at the lieutenant who was hiding behind a post but it never got to its objective, since at such a short distance the rocket failed to go off. Instead it destroyed part of the house behind.

In minutes no. 725 was an inferno. Splinters from glass and furniture became a danger: a grenade exploded and the rattle of guns and pistols could be heard. Miguel continued firing, the AKS burning his hands, emptying magazines of thirty bullets one after the other. He was wounded, a thin line of blood running down his cheek, probably the rebound from a bullet aimed at him at the beginning of the battle. There was to be no giving up.

Soon Carmen Castillo was shot in the arm and fainted. Miguel Enriquez dragged her to a safe place and continued the fight: a little while later a bullet hit his face and he lost consciousness. Was he dead? "Tonio" who was a doctor went over to examine him or at least to look at him. He believed him to be dead: "I made a medical error".⁶³ The error was one of

⁶¹ The model AKS Avtomat Kalashnikov Karabin is the version of the AKA-47 rifle used by paratroopers and armoured troops. The difference lies in the fact that it has a fixed wooden butt while the AKS has a folding metal one and also carries a spares kit.

It is 870 millimetres long and weighs 3.4 kilos when unloaded. Its range is 800 metres and it can fire 600 shots a minute, the speed of each bullet reaching 700 metres a second. The magazine, which is curved so as not to get in the way of the marksman while he is firing on the ground, can carry between 30 and 45 bullets. The AKA is actually the most famous and respected automatic rifle in the world and is one of the few weapons that has become a cultural symbol. It was designed by Mikhail Kalashnikov in 1947 and came into service with the Soviet armed forces in 1949. See www.kalshnikov.guns.ru.

⁶² Account of Roberto Moreno (member of the Political Committee of the MIR) in an interview with the author in Santiago, June 1999.

⁶³ The expression in inverted comments is that of Roberto Moreno (member of the Political Committee of the MIR) in an interview with the author in Santiago, June 1999.

enormous political magnitude, but it allowed him to save his own life because, after “examining” Miguel, “Tonio” and “Coño Molina” escaped from the house. They jumped over the back wall and got to Varas Mena street. There, at gunpoint, they took over a Fiat 600 from a driver who was passing by. In this car they arrived at bus stop 20 in Santa Rosa and then made their way to their respective hideouts. They had managed to get out before the area was sealed off and were convinced that Miguel Enriquez, their leader, had died in the shoot out.

However, a little or much later, we don’t know exactly how much time passed, Miguel recovered consciousness and continued fighting, once again using his AKS sub machine gun. Miguel Enriquez would not surrender.

A long time had passed since the battle had begun, probably two hours, and the place had been surrounded by detectives, policemen and agents from the DINA. It was impossible to keep resisting. So Miguel Enriquez shouted for them to stop firing as there was a wounded and pregnant woman in the house. After that he tried to escape towards San Francisco Street,. Several agents, among them a woman, closed off the only escape route. He shouted something at them at the same time as firing the last shots from his rifle or from his 38 revolver (we do not know for certain if it was a rifle or a revolver). It was a last attempt to reach San Francisco Street and get out of the line of fire. The female agent opened fire and so did the rest: ten bullets hit his body and he died where he stood.

Was it the shots from the gun of the female agent that killed Miguel Enriquez? It is possible but we are not sure: the verdict is still open.⁶⁴ Resistance ceased and for some minutes there was silence.

Immediately afterwards a group of detectives entered the house. In the first room, lying on the floor, unconscious in a pool of blood, they found Carmen Castillo (“Jimena”). She represented no danger but a man hit her in the mouth, breaking several teeth. She was taken to the Military Hospital. This was the last act of a play where everyone already knew the ending. The shoot out in Santa Fe Street had ended. The DINA had killed its most bitter enemy but had they finished the MIR?

In the house they found weapons, money and equipment for printing and falsifying documents. This was the heaviest blow for the organisation.

⁶⁴ This is the version that circulated among the ex security agents. At this actual stage of the investigation it is not possible to prove it: we leave it as a hypothesis in the hope of obtaining more details.

That night Colonel Manuel Contreras, with the guns still smoking⁶⁵ and the satisfaction of having done his duty, went to the chapel at the Military School to give away his daughter in marriage.

Miguel Enriquez fought for two hours alone against enormously superior forces. His death in battle, like that of Che's, converted him into a revolutionary example. As homage, there is a hospital in Havana named after him.

5. The day after

The MIR reacted rapidly. On Sunday October 6th, in Paris, Edgardo Enriquez ("Simon") confirmed that "the death of our Secretary General does not mean, in any way at all, the liquidation of the MIR. Miguel's rifle has fallen but another leader has already picked it up"⁶⁶. His declaration was over optimistic because whoever picked up the rifle would not have —nor could have— the leadership that Miguel Enriquez had. After his death, the organisation could never recover the vigour which the dead leader had instilled it with. Nevertheless the survivors continued their resistance against the military government. Towards 1980 they managed to build up a new professional centralised force, made up of politico-military cadres who entered the country secretly as part of Operation Return. Under the command of the historic leader Arturo Villabella ("Coño Aguilar"), a member of the Political Committee and military head of the organisation, they carried out several actions that caused a great impact among the people.

Seven years after the battle of Santa Fe street, people returned to talking about the MIR after an attempt on the life of Colonel Roger Vergara, director of the Army's Intelligence School and for a triple bank robbery in Santa Elena street. But none of these actions would eventually lead to success. Their time had passed. The definitive end of the MIR came with the assassination of Arturo Villabella and Hugo Ratier ("Jose"), their military leaders, in December 1983.⁶⁷

But, let us return to October 5th 1974. "Tito" had escaped from the shoot out and run to his house convinced that Miguel Enriquez was dead. The next day he discovered that he had abandoned him while he was still

⁶⁵ Cavallo, Ascanio, Manuel Salazar and Oscar Sepulveda: *La Historia Oculta del Régimen Militar: Memoria de una Epoca 1973-1988* (The Hidden History of the Military Regime: Memoir of an Epoch, 1973-1988), 1999, page 54.

⁶⁶ *La Segunda* newspaper, Monday October 7th 1974.

⁶⁷ See Perez, Cristian: *Historia del MIR: "Si Quieren Guerra, Guerra Tendran"* (If they want war, they'll get war), 2003.

alive. He sought political asylum. He saved his life and the life of his family but the medical error that he had committed would be the source of innumerable setbacks later on, because for the MIR, above all for Edgardo Enriquez ("Simon"), Miguel's brother, this mistake was much more than a medical error. From Europe, "Tito" was called to Cuba, where his companions as a sign of reproof refused to greet him. He was forced to leave the organisation and join the Communist Party of Chile, which offered him support during those difficult moments.

"Coño Molina", the other militant who fought alongside Miguel in Santa Fe street, was injured in an operation mounted by the Intelligence Service of the Airforce (SIFA) at the intersection of Alonso Cordoba and Vitacura streets. He was taken to a hospital where he died shortly afterwards. His female companion was also captured.

Carmen Castillo was interned for almost the whole of October 1974 in the Military Hospital: there she was visited frequently by officials of the DINA, who demanded that she divulged information as to the whereabouts of Andres Pascal Allende, the new Secretary General.⁶⁸ Through overtures made by her family, which was certainly important in Chile,⁶⁹ and the Catholic Church and by the enormous solidarity that the death in battle of her companion provoked in Europe, she was expelled from the country.

Miguel's son, who she was expecting, was born in England, gravely ill, because he had lacked oxygen during the confrontation in which his mother was wounded: he died after a few days.

The Army lieutenant seconded to the DINA, Miguel Krassnoff Martchenko, who was in charge of the operation and the first to exchange shots with Miguel Enriquez, was decorated for this action. In 1974 he received the medal for military valour. He has been the only soldier to obtain this award since the War of the Pacific in 1879. He retired voluntarily from the Army in 1998.

For its part the DINA (the National Intelligence Directorate) continued its implacable persecution of the MIR until it practically annihilated it in 1975. On the 15th of October that year there was a confrontation at the Santa Eugenia farm in Malloco between the leaders of

⁶⁸ A few days after Miguel's death, Andres Pascal took over the leadership of the MIR. Carmen Castillo relates that the DINA were that close to the party leadership that, finding her in the Military Hospital, the security agents showed her a letter from Andres Pascal Allende that they had intercepted, destined for other members of the leadership in which he told them that he had assumed command of the organisation.

⁶⁹ The father of Carmen Castillo ("Catita") is Fernando Castillo Velasco, ex-Rector of the Catholic University. Her uncle, Jaime Castillo Velasco, an important Christian Democrat lawyer, was later the founder of the Chilean Commission on Human Rights.

the MIR and numerous agents of the DINA. In the shoot out that followed, Dagoberto Perez (a member of the Political Committee) was killed, Andres Pascal Allende escaped and sought asylum in the Costa Rican Embassy, Nelson Gutierrez (another member of the Political Committee)⁷⁰ did the same but in the Papal Nunciature, while Martin Hernandez was detained at the house of Gerardo Whelan⁷¹.

At the beginning of the 21st century, several ex agents of the DINA were detained and numerous charges filed against them. They still maintain their loyalty to those leaders who guided them on the crusade against the politico-military organisations of a Marxist background.

THREE DECADES LATER

Thirty years have passed since that Spring Saturday when Miguel Enriquez lost his life. The Cold War that gave a certain legitimacy to General Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship and to the armed organisations that fought it, ended with the fall of the walls in 1989. This event put an end to the period of shootings and torture in Chile. In 1990 a democratically elected government took power, opening the doors to another era.

During this new period of time, our society has revalued democracy as an essential system for national co-existence and as the point of departure in the search for a better life for all. We have rejected the idea of forming armed groups to provoke social changes as well as the participation of members of the Armed Forces in the application of torture and other violations of human rights.

This commitment is the best way of paying homage to those who disappeared during the era of shootings and torture.

Lastly, the MIR is not the politico-military force of previous decades. Its past and that of Miguel Enriquez is no more than the history of those youths who gave their lives fighting with the wrong weapons for a just objective: to construct a better society.

⁷⁰ He was wounded in the confrontation.

⁷¹ Cavallo, Ascanio, Manuel Salazar and Oscar Sepulveda: *La Historia Oculta del Regimen Militar: Memoria de una Epoca, 1973-1988* (The Hidden History of the Military Regime: Memoir of an Epoch, 1973-1988), page 118.

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