The arpillera movement in Chile, 1974-1996

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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October 1997

UNIVERSITY

To my parents, Paul and Angelica Adams, and Howard Becker

Acknowledgments

Above all, I would like to thank Howard Becker for his wonderfully stimulating guidance, so generously given, and his great kindness to me during what was and continues to be my 'discovery of America'. I am also very grateful to my parents, Paul and Angelica Adams, and also my close friend Elke Teichman, for their invaluable support.

I would like to express my thanks to all those who helped me along the way- the staff, students, and faculty at the Department of Sociology at the University of Washington, a delightful intellectual home, my English advisor Colin Samson, and of course the many, many people who so kindly gave me information to help me in my data collection, in Europe and Chile. To name but a few- the arpillera groups (Taller Laboral, Las Místicas, Taller Peñiwén, the Bordadoras Lomas de Macul, the Conjunto of the Agrupación, and the Peñalolén group), Sra. Alicia, Professor Gonzalez, Valentina Bonne, Gustavo Donoso, Winnie Lira, Gloria Torres, Gloria Cruz, Luis Puente, Leonardo Aracena, Paulina Waugh, Bernadette Oriet, Alba Viotto, Andy McEntee, Iberia Torres, Ed Millard, Nicole Drouilly, the Instituto Chileno-Británico, and very many others. I am grateful also to my friends in the field- in particular Peg Snook and Raúl Herreros, for their support during a difficult time.

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an analysis of the 'arpillera world', the network of people cooperating to make, distribute and sell arpilleras (denunciatory wall hangings made by victims of political repression and economic deprivation in Chile). It adds to Becker's (1982) theory of 'art worlds' a political dimension, which has two components: (1) national and international political and economic contexts impact both artworks and art worlds, and (2) collective artistic activity in a context of political repression can foster a political consciousness in the artists. Art, it finds, is an important but understudied part of political movements, serving to inform, arouse, and shape the beliefs of diverse sets of movement actors. The arpilleras provided their 'consumers' (Chilean exiles and human rights activists in Europe and North America) with information about the state of affairs in Chile, and helped arouse in them the desire to oust Pinochet. The collective making of arpilleras caused the radicalisation of the shantytown women who made them.

The thesis also constructs a chronology of the arpillera. It examines changes over time in the arpillera (from denunciatory to bucolic) and distribution system (from solidarity-oriented to commercially oriented), in the light of anthropological and sociological theories of change in art forms. It links the sociology of art and social movements literatures by demonstrating how changes in art worlds can cause changes in levels of activism of the artists/activists. The demand for bucolic arpilleras was partly responsible for the de-radicalisation of the shantytown women who made them.

Finally, the thesis suggests that reciprocity in the fieldwork context can cause problems for the researcher because of the researcher's ever-changing membership status in the group she studies, and because of differences (in culture, power, and knowledge) between herself and her subjects. Data collection involved participant observation, interviews, documentary sources, and the analysis of approximately five hundred arpilleras, and took place in England, Switzerland, France, and Chile.

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INTRODUCTION

I step off the spotless, silent underground train built during the Pinochet years according to the latest Parisian model and follow the stream of bodies up the stairs, into the biting, damp, smoggy air. Walking rapidly along the crowded Santiago pavement lined with stalls selling everything from school text books to nail polish, I reach the post by the road which marks the bus stop. When the small, aggressively driven bus arrives I am the only fair-haired and light-skinned person to step on. I have carefully tucked my long hair into my three layers of sweater to make it less conspicuous, put my watch in my pocket, brought just enough money for the bus fairs, and left my bag at home, carrying instead a tiny inconspicuous notebook and pencil in the back pocket of my most tattered jeans. People still stare, wondering what on earth a *gringa* is doing in this Southern and poorest area of Santiago, doesn't she know she can get mugged, *gringos* are so gullible!

The bus goes past small houses with tiny front gardens and rows of tightly packed grey buildings, washing hanging between some of the windows, above a beaten earthen ground in lieu of a lawn. When it goes under the highway tunnel it has entered the *población*¹ Sta. Adriana, and the first line of layer upon layer of small houses with metal fences, faces the street, broken at regular intervals by an unmarked *pasaje* or small road leading into the depths of the grid-shaped urban periphery. Because all the houses look the same and there are almost no trees or landmarks, I always find it difficult to identify

Poorer working class neighbourhood. Consisting of very small, one-storey houses harbouring five to nine people (often several generations), sometimes built by the government, sometimes by the inhabitants themselves following a land seizure.

at which of the numerous bus stops I have to get off. A temporary newspaper stall sometimes helps and I step off the bus and walk as fast as I can down *Pasaje* 9. All the houses present identical facades, whitewashed brick and plaster with a small window, minute tiled front yard, and passageway to the equally small back yard, barely 2m by 3m. Juanita's² has potted plants in front of the house and a metal fence which has recently been painted. There is no bell so I use the standard system of calling out 'Aló' at the gate. The door down the side of the passageway opens and I hear Juanita's 'Come in' as the youngest of her numerous grandchildren stumbles out to see who it is.

As I step beyond the thin wooden door and enter the small, dark, pea-green painted living room, the acrid smell of paraffin hits me. A small, portable stove burns this cheapest of fuels and simultaneously heats a kettle placed on top of it, so that when tea is required less of the expensive gas is needed to bring the water to boil in the kitchen. The day is a raw one and the air inside is relatively warm, although not so warm that I take off any of my sweaters. Juana, the lady of the house, is, like her friend Sara, a childcare-worm woman in her sixties, grey-haired and older-looking than her age, but very lively and cheerful. She is pulling the threads out of pieces of white vest, making waipe or bundles of rags to sell to a woman who sells them to garages as car-cleaning cloths. She is seated at the round table which takes up a quarter of the living room space. Next to her, on the buffet, is a television, switched on but lacking an audience. Sara sits with her, her face serious and concentrated, making monos (tiny human figures) in cloth. In front of her is

² Real names appear in all cases. I discussed this issue with the women and when I told them my intention of changing their names in the dissertation they expressed disappointment. My understanding is that one of the reasons why they agreed to let me study them was so that they could be 'characters' in my dissertation.

her half-finished *arpillera*, a 39 x 45 cm cloth picture, its freshly-sewn appliqué work showing mountains, trees and houses. The *monos* are always the last thing she adds.

I kiss them hello and also say 'Hi' to Ariel, the one-and-a-half year old grandchild clinging to Juana's legs. Soon Catalina, aged three and wild, will appear from the kitchen, and Melissa, a little older and sweet and smiling, will return from school. When their mother of 26 arrives in an hour or so, at 6.30, they will congregate in the kitchen over food served on the wooden table with a cut-open pampers packet serving as a table cloth. The mother will heave Ariel into a tiny wooden chair which, placed on top of a normal chair, serves as a high chair. At about the same time Antonio, Juanita's quiet husband, will come home from his job cleaning a supermarket, walk through the living room shyly muttering 'Permiso' ('Excuse me') and retire to the television in the bedroom where he, too, will make 'waipe' as he watches.

I sit down next to Sara and Juana and inquire about the latest of their neverending string of health problems. They respond and, with a mother's concern, ask me whether I have got used to the nightly prowl and screeching of cats on the tin roof above my rented room in the Latin Quarter of Santiago. I ask if I can help. Sara gives me *monos* and I set to work sewing the black dots for eyes, little red dot for mouth, two loops around with a piece of wool for the waist band, and compact long black stitches over the back of the head for hair. They joke in affectionate tones that I am now a professional 'monera' or mono-maker.

Just as Juana is complaining, for the umpteenth time, about her difficult grandchildren and her daughter's abuse in expecting her to look after them all day, every day, while she works, Señora Ada, the head of the workshop, steps tall and dignified, into the room. Her 15 year old daughter follows and flops onto the sheet-covered sofa to watch the television and play with Ariel. Ada chuckles wryly as she tells us about seeing her breath when she woke up in the morning. She sits on the remaining chair at the table, opening her bag and taking out another half-finished arpillera. They are lucky to be making arpilleras as there have been no orders for months, 'things are bad, times have changed, the Europeans and government are no longer interested in supporting them, they have been left by the wayside and forgotten'. Ada tells the ladies that they are all going to have to hurry up because she goes to drop the arpilleras off at Mari's (the head of all the arpillera groups of this Southern 'sector' of Santiago) next Friday, only eight days away. This will be one of the now rare occasions on which she meets up with the leaders of the other workshops. Things have changed since the Pinochet years, when such meetings which were so frequent, lively and varied (including 'reflection days' on political affairs, and theatrical productions). Unlike most meetings of the past, this will be a tense one, as Mari looks at the arpilleras each leader brings, accepts some to take for a second round of 'quality control' at the Fundación Solidaridad, and criticises and rejects others.

Boiling with anger at what seem to her very arbitrary reasons for the inevitable rejection of a number, Ada will return to the workshop with news which causes near-despair and rage in Sara. With her husband on municipal charity money (he was a free-lance guitarist), six adult but hard-up children, and no income of her own other than the irregular arpillera work and *mono*-making, Sara often barely has enough money for food,

let alone medicine when she falls ill, or entertainment of any sort. When she walks the six blocks to her home she returns to a husband she finds uncommunicative, and the prospect of undoing and re-doing her work. Ada soothes Sara sweetly, telling her the changes are not so hard and that she will help her. Juana rarely needs consoling; it seems, although no-one really knows, that her daughter Sandra makes the arpilleras for her. Indeed, Juana, if she is not washing her grand-daughter's school uniform, giving the children some food and dealing with Ariel clambering all over her, is only ever to be seen doing the 'waipe'. Yet, her witty jokes and warmth are an essential ingredient in the workshop's cosy and intimate atmosphere of an old friends' meeting.

Conversation ranges widely. Sara tells us about her new daughter-in-law of whom she does not approve and feels a little jealous, as it is now she who 'atiende a mi hijo' or 'serves my son'. Sara feels unwanted and pushed out of her role. Ada tells me about the oppressed lives of the miners of saltpetre, from whose stock she comes, in the Atacama Desert far North of Santiago. She has taken it upon herself to educate me about 'los pobres' ('the poor'), of which she counts herself a part, having noticed that 'I have a lot to learn'. We all look at attention-seeking Ariel and talk about his progress in walking. Juana jokes about drinking lots of 'jote' (red wine mixed with coca cola) in the good old days when the workshops in the area used to go to the sea-side for a week end together. The other ladies, knowing about her diabetes, chuckle and Ada (my mentor in affairs of the workshop) assures me 'Es brava para hablar no más' ('it's only talk').

At 7.30 or thereabouts we venture out into the orange night air. Juana walks us to the gate and the others cross the busy 'Callejón Lo Ovalle' with me (it is not flooded this

time as it has not rained) and wait until I am safely on the bus before going to their sister in law's nearby home in Ada's case, and her own home in Sara's. I write keywords in my notebook if I am lucky enough to get a seat on the crowded, steamy vehicle and continue to do so on the underground, during the 45-minute trip home. I am famished and cook myself spaghetti alla carbonara before switching on my lap top and commencing fieldnotes.

I am in a small Third World products shop called Magasins du Monde, in the back-street of a not-so-smart part of Geneva. There are at least four housewives choosing presents amongst its selection of crafts from around the world; one drifts over to the 'fair trade' coffee and rice packets, lining a side wall. Intrigued and delighted, I find a pile of 18 x 22 cm arpilleras and a small photocopied explanatory sheet of paper. There is also a large (45 x 39 cm) one, hanging at the side of the shelf. I ask the volunteer saleslady if I might see them and take photos and, listening to my explanation, she agrees. The arpilleras show small, multi-coloured houses and green trees amongst which *monos* sell fruit and vegetables at stalls, or go for a stroll carrying bread bags and brooms. The Andes form a backdrop and silently sign 'Chile'. Whilst the houses, trees and mountains are common to all arpilleras, the 'theme' changes. If they do not show people selling food at stalls, they might show an outdoor bread oven and bread being laid out on a table, a group of children dancing around in a circle, people picking fruit in trees or children piling into school as a teacher rings a bell. One in the pile shows Mapuche Indians in

traditional attire, weaving and working around their straw and stick houses in the South of Chile.

It is June and I am due to leave Chile in just three weeks, after a year's stay. I walk past the landscaped park of Cerro Sta. Lucía in the centre of Santiago, towards the national art museum. Tall, plain, early Twentieth Century, buildings line this very busy road. At the base of one is a discreet crafts shop with 'Fundación Solidaridad' painted on the window and a wide variety of crafts within: carved wooden tulips, appliqued bags in arpillera style, hand-knitted sweaters, arpillera pictures and copper plates. The shop is nearly always empty but as I step through it to the back door I reach a short corridor and go down to a basement without windows, containing the small offices of five or six hardworking staff. Winnie Lira is the director of this crafts programme branch of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, the human rights organisation of the Catholic Church and a centre of resistance during the Pinochet regime. She, like many 'arpilleristas' (arpillera-makers), is fed up with students and journalists who, over the years have come to ask questions about the arpilleras. She is also tired, having been promoting the same products to foreign buyers for twenty years. These foreign buyers (individuals, charities and commercial enterprises in Europe and America), have become less and less enthusiastic about arpilleras as Chile fades into the background in terms of human rights abuses (having become, instead, the 'wealthy economic dragon of Latin America'), and the latest crisiscountry grabs their attention. In the hall between the offices sits a cardboard box with a selection of arpilleras of the Seventies and Eighties. Men crawl in a blue night as yellow

search beams with a Big Brother-like eye darts around looking for them; a group of women wave goodbye to a plane in which their loved ones depart in indefinite exile; a young adult is seized by two men and dragged to a plate-less car, never to be seen or heard of again. In the early days (1974-1979), all arpilleras coming out of the two-hundred or so workshops in Santiago denounced the political repression and economic hardship of the Pinochet years. A small number in the box, however, are from the end of the dictatorship and are lyrical and quiet. A woman with a photo of her disappeared one stuck to her chest looks silently and sadly at the viewer. A group of people walk down an imaginary path through a mountain range to the sun, and hope. This is one of four or five collections of arpilleras around the world, rarely admired by anyone, and displayed on the walls of no art museum.

The hall in which the box sits is the site of busy activity. Mari and her counterparts from different areas of Santiago (now heading drastically reduced numbers of groups as most arpilleristas have acquired steady jobs or returned to their full-time housewife roles) come here to hand in the arpilleras and wait tensely as Winnie or Margarita, a professional textile artist, examine them, make comments which to the 'pobladoras' (shantytown women) are humiliating, and accept or reject a number. As they leave, the women chat together briefly. This same hall is also where arpilleras, newly accepted, are packed into cardboard boxes which are marked with European or Canadian addresses and picked up to be taken to the airport. Such a hall, during the dictatorship, would have housed the psychotherapeutic leisure activities and reflection meetings of arpillera workshops, groups of unemployed people, and political groups, but since the Vicaría closed down in 1992 all such activities have stopped.

This dissertation is the product of a year's fieldwork on the arpillera in Chile. Arpilleras are dissident art works made out of cloth, using the appliqué technique. They were first produced in 1974, shortly after the coup d'état that marked the beginning of the Pinochet dictatorship. During the dictatorship years (1973-1990), the majority of arpillera makers were women who lived in Santiago's low-income neighbourhoods (poblaciones). Most experienced exacerbated poverty, repression and state violence, but not persecution directed at a particular a family member. Other categories of person also made arpilleras. These included leftist prisoners of conscience, women living in small towns near Santiago, relatives of "the disappeared" (individuals who had been abducted and not heard from again), and Chilean refugees in Europe. Religious and left-leaning groups smuggled the arpilleras out of Chile. Foremost among these was a humanitarian organisation that was part of the Catholic Church of Santiago; it was called the Vicaría de la Solidaridad. The main buyers of arpilleras in the 1970s and 1980s were individuals in Europe and North America who felt sympathy for the arpillera makers and wanted to help them; they constituted "solidarity market." By the late 1980s, the buyers had become quite different; they tended to be less aware of human rights violations in Chile and more interested in purchasing a decorative object.

In the Seventies and Eighties shantytown arpilleras depicted hunger, unemployment, and political repression. They became less violent and denunciatory as time went on, so that by the Nineties they depicted markets, outdoor bread-making, vegetable harvesting and other jolly, naive scenes. The women who made arpilleras changed as much as the works themselves. They developed a political consciousness and became politically active (where previously they had been apolitical), and they also became aware of gender inequality, taking action to change their role in the home and beyond. However, these new consciousnesses did not last and they reverted to an extent to their old behavioural patterns and housewifely roles when democracy returned.

This thesis is a sociology of the arpillera and examines all aspects of this 'art world' (Becker 1976), or group of individuals and organisations whose activity is necessary to produce, process, distribute and buy the objects which are characteristic of the art world. Very little serious research on the arpillera has been carried out (please see Appendix 1 for a short review of the literature). The thesis focuses as much on the arpillera-makers as the arpillera world, analysing how they changed in the process of making arpilleras. The central question which this sociology of the arpillera answers is: how do untrained artists, in a situation of economic crisis and political repression, express themselves through art, and how does doing so affect them? This question holds others within it: What is the role of political repression in creative expression, and in the configuration of political and gender consciousness? What is the role of art in resistance to repression? And finally, how does artistic expression change over time and what causes it to change?

Chapter 1 (Methods) describes the methods I used to conduct my research. The appendix to this chapter (Appendix 2) reveals the extent to which I as a researcher influenced the findings of my research in various ways, as well as the impact the research had on me. Chapter 2 outlines the socio-political circumstances in which the *arpilleristas* (women who made arpilleras) operated. Chapter 3 (The Arpillera Groups and Institutions) introduces the arpillera groups observed and the institutions within which they function. It also examines why the women made arpilleras and outlines the concept of solidarity which was the ethic of the community of arpillera buyers and makers, all of whom were opposed to the Pinochet regime. Chapter 4 treats the distribution of arpilleras. Chapter 5 analyses the way the arpillera changed over time and the influence

of the buyers and Vicaría on the arpillera. Chapters 6 and 7 show how arpillera-making in workshops affected the arpilleristas' lives. Chapter 6 explores how the women became politically aware and active, but reverted to their previously apolitical state when democracy returned. Finally, Chapter 7 analyses how the women became aware of gender inequality and how they challenged their roles and changed their relationships with their families as a result of that awareness.

CHAPTER 1: METHODS

Methodological background

The Origins of Fieldwork

I undertook fieldwork from 1995 to 1996, participant observing five groups of Chilean arpilleristas in Santiago, and carrying out open and semi-structured interviews with them and other people connected with the arpilleras, in Chile and in Europe. I also examined documentary sources (including the arpilleras themselves). I trace my lineage to the work of ethnographers and American micro-sociologists of the Chicago School. Fieldwork, also referred to as 'field research', 'qualitative method', 'interpretative research', 'case study method' and 'ethnography' is an approach to social investigation which has traditionally been associated with social anthropologists, whose 'field' consisted of a small-scale society where it was possible to do 'research' by living and working among the people. The main instrument for the research is the researcher (Burgess 1982:1). Becker (1963:2) describes the process in his classic work on deviance, suggesting that if the researcher 'is to get an accurate and complete account of what deviants do, what their patterns of association are, and so on, he must spend at least some time observing them in their natural habitat as they go about their ordinary activities'. Field research 'involves observing and analysing real-life situations, studying actions and activities as they occur. The field researcher, therefore, relies upon learning firsthand about a people, and a culture' (Burgess 1982:1).

The origins of fieldwork may be traced back to the Fifth Century BC with reports of foreign peoples and of the Peloponnesian wars, according to Wax (1971) and Douglas (1976). Wax states that missionaries, travellers and merchants were amongst the first reporters of ethnographic data. Urry (1972), on the other hand, suggests that anthropology as a discipline began in the Nineteenth Century with the preparation of the volume Notes and Queries on Anthropology between 1870 and 1920. The first three editions of the volume critiqued questionnaires prepared for travellers, and suggested which aspects of social life should be observed and how to make more precise observations so as to supply the anthropologist with information. These volumes were written mainly for non-anthropologists.

Because reports from travellers, missionaries and administrators were fraught with problems, a number of anthropologists decided to go and collect their own data³. In 1898 Haddon led a British expedition to the islands of the Torres Strait, for the purpose of collecting ethnographic material. Rivers and Seligman were other British advocates of going into the field. Rivers advocated living with the people to study their culture, and learning their language. He emphasised understanding the native language, obtaining and paying good informants, collecting texts, genealogies and life histories, and keeping systematic notes. Some of his suggestions were written in the fourth edition of Notes and Queries. Meanwhile, in America, Boas made trips to the North West coast.

³ Much of the following account (until the Chicago School section) is based on Burgess (1982).

Malinowski used much of Rivers' suggestions for Argonauts of the Western

Pacific (Malinowski 1922). He believed that anthropologists should be explicit about the methods they used to gather data, know the aims of their studies, live amongst the natives without other Europeans, come to know individuals, their customs and beliefs, and study natives in their natural setting rather than use paid informants. The goal of fieldwork, for Malinowski, was 'to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world' (Malinowski 1992: 25).

A little early British anthropology studied people in Britain. Booth's <u>Life and Labour of the People of London</u> (Booth 1889-1902) involved what today would be called participant observation, so as to research the problem of poverty in the East End of London. One of the early methodologies was Webb and Webb's (1932) <u>Methods of Social Study</u>. Their discussion of methods includes documents, interviewing, observation and experiment; they considered observation a crucial part of the study of any social institution. Beatrice Webb, for example, gained access to the homes of the poor by working as a rent collector, and she also studied the 'sweating system', visiting tailoring shops and obtaining work as a 'plain trouser hand'. Like Malinowski, the Webbs used systematic note taking and data recording, participation in everyday activities in order to gather data, and the combining of different methods of social investigation.

The Chicago School

The Chicago School of sociologists developed an interest in field research in the early Twentieth Century in America (especially 1915-35). The School played a crucial part in the movement away from general theory, social philosophy, or purely historical work, towards the firsthand empirical investigation of society by means of personal documents, observations, and interviewing, conducted within an implicit general theoretical framework (Bulmer, 1984: xiii). As Kurtz (1984: 2) points out: 'The most consistent thread running throughout the work of Chicago sociologists is the continued effort to integrate sociological theories with empirical investigation of the social world'.

W.I. Thomas and Robert Park were at the centre of Chicago sociology (Kurtz, 1984: 3). The School's other members included Burgess, Dewey, Mead, Anderson, Thrasher, and Shaw. Park and Burgess 'inspired an entire generation of graduate students to comb the city and its institutions, looking for patterns of social organization within natural areas of Chicago, the "sociological laboratory" (Kurtz, 1984:4). In 1916 Park drew up a programme of research for the group. He believed that anthropological methods could be used, as well as the journalistic tradition of observation and unstructured interviewing and the literal naturalism of Zola, Dreiser and Upton Sinclair. The sociologist, he thought, should go out to the street to gather rich, detailed data (Burgess 1982: 7).

Frequently, the work of this School involved traditional field methods in the form of observation and unstructured interviews, complemented by life history documents or documentary evidence. In <u>The Hobo</u>, for example, Anderson (1923) used observation, life histories, and unstructured interviews as well as family background, to analyse the

homeless man, which he categorised into five types. Other examples of work from the Chicago School include The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-20), The Jack Roller (Shaw, 1930), The Gang (Thrasher, 1927), The Negro Family in Chicago (Frazier, 1931), Vice in Chicago (Reckless, 1933), Hotel Life (Hayner, 1936), The Taxi Dance Hall (Cressey, 1932), Family Disorganization (Mowrer, 1927), The Ghetto (Wirth, 1928), Suicide (Cavan, 1928), Mental Disorders in Urban Areas (Faris, 1960), and The Gold Coast and the Slum (Zorbaugh, 1929). Most of the School's work studied Chicago, but it also produced monographs on subjects other than those related to the city of Chicago (e.g. Hiller's The Strike, written in 1928).

The Chicago School has been criticised by Douglas (1976) and others for containing less analysis and more raw data, for not revealing the processes amongst groups, and for being based on assumptions of a 'little community' where conflict and complexity is missing (Burgess 1982: 7). However, there is a tendency to forget the diversity of methods used by the School, and particularly the quantitative work by, for example, Burgess, Ogburn, Thurstone, and Stouffer (Bulmer 1984: xv). In reality, the Chicago sociologists' approach to sociology was varied and eclectic; they used surveys and statistical data as well as participant observation and unstructured interviewing.

Community Studies beyond the Chicago School

A number of sociologists who were not in the Chicago School studied communities in both rural and urban areas in a similar way to the Chicagoans.

Community studies draw on the beliefs of the Chicago School that the researcher should go out into the street and observe people. British sociologists such as Rex and Moore (1967) who studied Sparkbrook, and Bell (1977) who worked in Banbury, based their approach on both the Chicago School and the anthropological tradition where researchers took as their unit of study small-scale territorial communities. Often such studies involved living in the locality, amongst the people. Whyte, for example, lived in the Italian neighbourhood he studied in Street Corner Society. Pons lived with the locals and became a member of an association that met to brew and drink beer, when he wrote Stanleyville (Pons 1969). The researcher, in such studies, often takes on roles that the locals understand. Pons, for example, took on the roles of photographer and local letterwriter.

A combination of techniques have been used by community studies coming out of places other than Chicago. In Middletown (Lynd and Lynd, 1929) and Middletown in Transition (Lynd and Lynd, 1937) for example, data was collected using observational methods, but also documentary evidence in the form of census data, records and yearbooks, statistical sources in the form of work records, formal and informal interviews, and questionnaires to local experts and members of clubs and associations.

Gans, in his study of Levittown (Gans, 1967), used participant observation together with a questionnaire. Central to the research process are the researchers themselves, who play a variety of roles to gain wide experience of the social setting (Burgess 1982: 8).

Techniques similar to these have been used to study institutions as well as localities. Goffman studied mental asylums (1968) and maintains that: 'any group of

persons- prisoners, primitives, pilots or patients - develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable, and normal once you get close to it, and that a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject'. Chicago-style methods, therefore, were used beyond Chicago, and for both urban communities and institutions.

The Symbolic Interactionists

An interpersonal theory of social behaviour was an important strand of the Chicago School, which is often viewed as a precursor of contemporary symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionists including Mead, Blumer, Hughes and Becker, had links with the Chicago School⁴.

The symbolic interactionists reject the idea of an objective social 'structure' in the sense of a 'social system' (as in Parsons or Althusser) which determines from above the activities going on 'on the ground'. The term 'structure' seems to regard human being as mere 'effects' or 'reflections' of the encompassing structure, and to neglect the 'meanings' with which people imbue their lives and which colour their relations with others. The symbolic interactionists view social activity itself as the prime topic of concern for social analysis, as society is 'people doing things together' (Becker 1970); social life is constructed by individuals themselves in their interactions with others. In

⁴ I am indebted to Layder (1994) for much of the following discussion.

their analysis of social life the symbolic interactionists focus on the situations that people experience and which they believe to be meaningful.

The framework of symbolic interactionism as described below has been developed in diverse directions by a number of writers. The major distinction within symbolic interactionism is that between the 'Iowa School' and the 'Chicago School'. The Iowa school, like the Chicago School, is centred around the concept of self and interaction, but in the context of a more traditional approach to scientific analysis, and is associated with positivism. It views social life and society as more structured than the Chicago School. Stryker (1981) for example, advocates the need for a more 'objective' account of symbolic interactionism which stresses the constraining nature of structural (macro) features of social life. He states that 'all structures impose some limits on the kinds of definitions that may be called into play and thus limit the possibilities for action' (1981: 55). The Chicago School (of which Blumer and Becker are prime representatives) stresses the involvement of the researcher and the idea that he or she should try to unravel the 'meaningful worlds' of those social groups that are the topic of interest. The researcher must try to get as close as possible to the subject of analysis to get an 'insider account' of what it is like to be a member of the group (Layder 1994: 63).

Accounts of symbolic interactionism emphasise, usually, its contribution to empirical knowledge generated by field research. Some writers in the tradition argue that conscious efforts at theory-building get in the way of empirical investigation by distracting the researcher from the concrete empirical world. Others argue that it is not enough to be interested in the accumulation of empirical facts. Glaser (1967), for

example, argues that only by generating theory from empirical data can there be any real cumulative progress in our knowledge of the social world.

Mead, whose Mind, Self and Society was published in 1934, is widely recognised by most commentators on symbolic interactionism as the 'founding father' of that intellectual orientation, although Cooley, Dewey, Park, and Thomas also played an important role⁵. Mead was opposed to the view that people mechanically respond to external stimuli, and tried to incorporate the notion of an inner mental life or subjective experience, in his view of social interaction. For Mead, people respond to stimuli in the social environment by reflecting on what particular stimuli 'mean' and by selecting a line of behaviour that they think is appropriate to the situation at hand (Layder 1994: 59). Thus, the individual is born into and defined in terms of and ongoing flux of social activity; a person's self and mind are intrinsically social processes. Mead believed that people's ability to interact skilfully with each other is the result of inner, but nonetheless social workings of the mind; behaviour develops in the course of interaction. Most symbolic interactionists view society as a dynamic process of co-operative activity among individuals, or an emergent and ever-developing network of relationships (Layder 1994: 60).

Blumer, who set out to define what it meant, coined the term 'symbolic interactionism' in 1937. His understanding of symbolic interactionism builds on Mead and Cooley, as well as on W.I. Thomas, John Dewey and others. According to Blumer

⁵ The issue of the founding father is controversial. According to Harvey (1983) Mead was in fact not a great influence on the students in the department during his lifetime and his central concept of 'self' excludes much that later symbolic interactionists include (Rock, 1979: 166).

(1969, reprinted in Collins 1994: 304), symbolic interactionism rests on three premises. The first is that human beings act toward things (objects, human beings, categories of human beings, institutions, guiding ideals, activities of others and the situations an individual encounters in his daily life) on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Blumer's second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. This approach is very different from the premise that meaning is intrinsic to and emanates from the thing that has it. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing. Because their actions define the thing for the person, meanings are social products. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters. First, the actor indicates to himself the things towards which he is acting, and secondly, he selects, checks, suspends, regroups and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action. Interpretation, therefore, is a formative process in which 'meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action' (Blumer 1994: 307). In other words, 'People act in terms of meaning which arises out of interaction' (Layder 1994: 62). Meaning, as it arises in interaction, and through the interpretative and flexible responses of participants, therefore, is central to the perspective of symbolic interaction.

Human society as a whole, or groups, for Blumer, are 'people in association. Such association exists necessarily in the form of people acting toward one another and thus engaging in social interaction. Such interaction in human society is characteristically and

predominantly on the symbolic level; as individuals acting individually, collectively, or as agents of some organization encounter one another they are necessarily required to take account of the actions of one another as they form their own action. They do this by a dual process of indicating to others how to act and of interpreting the indications made by others. Human group life is a vast process of such defining to others what to do and of interpreting their definition; through this process people come to fit their activities to one another and to form their own individual conduct' (Blumer 1994: 311). Symbolic interactionism was to prove very influential for the second generation of Chicagoans.

The Second Chicago School (post-war graduates of Chicago)⁶

In 1952 Herbert Blumer moved to Berkeley and the School's emphasis changed slightly. The core of the Second School period was between 1946 and 1952. It may be characterised by 'the intensive focus on the empirical world; on seeing and understanding behavior in its particular and situated forms. Data that do not stay close to the events, actions, or texts being studied are always suspect. There is a hostility to generalizations at any level that are not connected to description, to immersion in substantive matter⁷. What Geertz called "thick description" is the ideal, not always achieved but always to be aimed at. Other data and other methods were acceptable but more as concessions to practicality than as preferred ways to study human behavior' (Gusfield, 1995: xii). Most of the Second School was suspicious of records and questionnaires, even the department was

⁶ The second school includes some of the symbolic interactionists but a number of these symbolic interactionists worked outside it.

diverse in its orientation (containing demographers, macrosociologists and applied researchers as well as qualitative sociologists) (Fine, 1995:4). Members of the School include Howard Becker, Erving Goffman, Gary Alan Fine, Eliot Freidson, Joseph Gusfield, Robert Habenstein, Lewis Killian, Helena Lopata, Hans Mauksch, Gregory Stone and Ralph Turner. They were trained by, amongst others, Herbert Blumer, Everett Hughes, W. Lloyd Warner, Robert Redfield, David Riesman, Anselm Strauss, Ernest Burgess, and Louis Wirth, in the period immediately following the Second World War.

lesser extent, formed the dominant intellectual influences of the second Chicago School (Gusfield 1995: x). Hughes was deeply committed to the observation of behaviour in a natural setting (Gusfield, 1995: x) and his orientation had more in common with the methods of anthropologists than with sociological practice. Becker, his student, followed his orientation by writing about groups in which he had participated as a member (e.g. as a dance musician or accompanying groups of medical students). The School used some of its predecessors as models: 'The Park tradition and the Chicago School of field observations was... a major model of what sociologists do best. That emphasis had its newer model in Whyte's Street Corner Society and we were all imbued more or less with a great fondness for it... that model was, in many ways, an ideal... George Herbert Mead was, as we referred to it, the 'Bible'. We read Mead with great intensity, discussed it with great intensity and the symbolic interactionist orientation seemed to us at the center of what sociology was' (Taped communication of Gusfield, 1990, recorded in Fine 1995:6).

⁷ I draw on this principle in that my conclusions are inductive, coming out of the data rather than being

The work of the Second Chicago School appeared in publications and gained attention during the late 1950's, through the 1960's and 1970's (Fine 1995). Examples include Goffman's <u>The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life</u> (1959), <u>Boys in White</u> (Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strauss 1961), Becker's <u>Outsiders</u> (1963), Fine's <u>Symbolic</u> <u>Crusade</u> (1963) and Eliot Freidson's <u>Profession of Medicine</u> (1972).

The Second School, and in particular Becker's participatory model, was an influence in my work, leading me to participate in arpillera groups, making and selling arpilleras. Whyte was another influence, as were a number of ethnographies of groups involved in artistic activity.

Community studies of groups involved in artistic activity

A small number of studies of groups engaging in artistic activity served as a model for my dissertation. Such models were both methodological and theoretical, in that their categories of analysis served both as theoretical categories and areas in which to focus on in the course of data gathering and analysis. It was because I had read Art Worlds (in which Becker analyses the audiences for art works), for example, that I participated in the selling of arpilleras, interviewed people about selling, and devoted a chapter of the dissertation to distribution.

defined by the literature.

Many ethnographic studies (including my own) of groups engaging in artistic activity use as their theoretical framework Becker's Art Worlds (1982). Although not obviously an ethnographic study, much of this monograph was based on Becker's experience as a jazz musician. With its delineation of all the different activities of different groups of people which contribute to the production of an art form (everything from state, to audience, to technology), the monograph provides a model for sociologists and ethnographers doing research on art by implicitly suggesting what they should examine in their study (e.g. the distribution network, the materials, etc.).

An art world, Becker's key concept, is a network of people whose co-operative activity, organised via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that an art world is known for. The artist does not produce a work of art in isolation; he or she is one of an entire network of people who, together, shape the end product. Ultimately, 'it is not unreasonable to say that it is the art world, rather than the individual artist, which makes the work' (Becker 1982: 194). In Art Worlds, Becker explores the various features of these networks⁸. These features include conventions of medium and professional culture; resources required for the production or execution of that art (including material resources and 'support personnel'); modes of distribution (self-support, patronage, or public sale); an 'aesthetic' (and its development and dissemination); the state (which is an actor in art worlds because of the laws it produces, the funding it provides and the censorship with which it constrains); the choices which are made by actors in the art world to constrain or shape the end product and determine its fate ('editing', in Becker's terms); and reputations (which do not rest

⁸ I have drawn on an unpublished document by Naomi Leite for part of this summary.

upon the activities of the 'artist' alone, but are made through the participation of all aspects of an art world).

Becker analyses the relationship any given individual may have to a particular world. The artist may be an integrated professional (making art within the conventions of an art world), a maverick (who has rejected the constraints of an art world and no longer participates in it, even thought he or she has been trained in it); a folk artist (who does not function in professional art world but rather produces art for his or her immediate community), and the naive artist (who has no connection to an art world, lacks an explanatory language for his or her activities, and who produces work without reference to the constraints of contemporary convention).

As well as examining the features of an art world and people's relationship to art worlds, Becker analyses the changes which can occur in art worlds. 'Changes in art', he states, 'occur through changes in worlds' (1982: 309). Art worlds change continuously as new solutions to problems are continually found, each solution altering the problem somewhat. Innovations in art worlds might or might not last; they last 'when participants make them the basis of a new mode of co-operation, or incorporate a change into their ongoing co-operative activities' (1982: 309) so that ideas for change and visions 'are important, but their success and permanence rest on organization, not on their intrinsic worth' (1982: 310).

A given activity can change from craft (defined by utility, virtuosity of production, and sometimes beauty) to art (defined by a devaluation of utility, changed

standards of skill, and primary emphasis upon beauty). Conversely, art may develop into 'academic' or 'commercial' art, where the 'academic art' is 'art produced in a world in which artists and others shift their concern from expressiveness and creativity to virtuosity' (1982: 289) and 'commercial' art is art in which 'subordination to the requirements of audience and employers occurs in a more coercive and complete way' (1982: 291).

Becker analyses the birth and decline of an art world, as well as artistic revolutions (which 'make major changes in the character of the works produced and in the conventions used to produce them' (1982: 305)). Art worlds are born either with the invention and diffusion of a new technology which makes certain new art products possible, or with the development of a new concept, or with the development of a new audience. The first people involved experiment with the new possibility. They produce what might be called a local art world, one whose 'circle of co-operation does not go beyond the face-to-face interaction of a local community' (1982: 314). After a period of time, the art world spreads beyond the original locality. Successful suppliers begin exporting their products to other locales in which the process of local experimentation can take place (1982: 320). Although colleagues and audiences are local for a long time they begin to be recruited from other areas, so that a small number of art worlds eventually become national and even international. New business and distribution arrangements are in part what help the growing art world to spread over a larger territory: the distributors begin to look everywhere for material. Increased communication (because of technology or because artists and audience members travel) between local art worlds also helps them enlarge. Once the skills necessary to participate in the art world are no

longer linked to a specific locale, the art world can recruit personnel from anywhere. Finally, 'when an innovation develops a network of people who can cooperate nationwide, perhaps even internationally, all that is left to do to create an art world is to convince the rest of the world that what is being done is art, and deserves the rights and privileges associated with that status' (1982: 339).

Art worlds, states Becker, decline. 'Since art worlds grow through the diffusion of both organizations and conventions, anything which interferes with either kind of growth limits the growth of art worlds' (1982: 348). Growth might be limited because of ignorance among sizeable social groups of the conventions which inform a work. Decline might also occur when some groups which used the conventions of their work, lose that knowledge, or when new personnel cannot be recruited to maintain the world's activities. Decline seldom proceeds to the point of total death, however.

Becker concludes by suggesting that social organisation involves people acting together to produce a variety of different events in a recurring way, just as they do in an art world. Collective actions and the events they produce are the basic unit of sociological investigation.

Stith Bennett was a pupil of Howard Becker's. His On Becoming a Rock

Musician was another model of 'what to look for' in the field. Bennett carried out

fieldwork on local rock groups in Colorado for two years, and did six years of sporadic

fieldwork in Illinois, Washington, California, Missouri, and Provence (Southern France).

He participated as a musician in a number of groups. His monograph is 'not so much an

ethnography of American popular musicians (it is not complete enough to be that) as a focused study of how skills, ideas, and human identities manage to be created and transmitted in the context of industrialized culture' (1980: ix). Using Becker's concept of career (as described in Outsiders) as well as his concept of an art world, Bennett shows that the rock musician becomes a rock musician as the result of a number of interactions (with the instrument, the group, the audience, the recording technology, and with other people's music). Bennett describes group dynamics, the instruments, equipment, performances, the technology, the nature of practices, the nature of performances, the development of one's own aesthetic, and the importance of notation systems.

Finally, Finnegan's The Hidden Musicians (1989), an ethnography of numerous art worlds in a British town, also uses Becker's notion of the art world as a theoretical framework, and served as a model in my own writing. In her core chapters, Finnegan describes the different worlds (e.g. the brass band world, the folk music world) in Milton Keynes. She focuses on: membership, practice sessions, performances, foundation date of group and aims, formal organisation, the yearly cycle, the music and repertoire, instruments, prominence of the group's activities to the public, meaning of participation for to the participants, and self-consciousness about making up a world. Her categories of analysis were helpful in my own writing, as was the structure of her monograph (with the central chapters each describing a musical world in much the same way that my chapter 3 describes the arpillera groups).

MY FIRST CONTACT WITH THE SUBJECT

My mother is Chilean and I had lived in Chile for a year (1991-1992). During this time and upon my return to Europe I worked for the United Nations on projects connected with women and development, and became very interested in gender issues. My last project in Chile had been a self-designed study of well-known Chilean women artists, and involved my interviewing a number; I became interested in Chilean art. When I returned to Europe I reflected that I had got to know a good deal about the lives of wealthier people and neighbourhoods in Chile and very little about the majority of the population. I had visited an economically deprived area of Santiago to help run a seminar on pollution, visited the very 'rebellious' shantytown of La Victoria, done volunteer work in an organisation which helped street children, but other than this, my friendship with my great aunt's maid and contact with other maids and bus drivers, I had had almost no experience of working-class life in Chile. I chose my Ph.D. topic because I wanted to return to Chile and satisfy my interest in art, less wealthy people and women. It occurred to me that the arpillera (which I had heard about but never seen) might satisfy all my 'requirements'. A conversation with a Chilean professor convinced me that the study was feasible. Without knowing much about the arpillera at all, I embarked on my Ph.D. in October 1994 in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex.

DATA-GATHERING IN EUROPE

I began collecting data in Europe, carrying out open and semi-structured interviews, in English, Spanish and French. As my main purpose was to acquaint myself

with the subject as broadly as possible, I interviewed everyone I could find, connected with the arpillera. A second goal was to learn about the selling of arpilleras in Europe. I also used three other methods of data collection in Europe. Firstly, I examined arpilleras and built up of a visual data base of arpilleras in the form of photographs, photocopies, post cards, and other documents (e.g. promotional leaflets of arpilleras). Secondly, I observed the places where people connected with the distribution of arpilleras lived and worked. Finally, I gathered written documents.

Sec.

In England I interviewed Chilean political refugees, people connected with Chilean exile or human rights organisations, and ex-Agrupación⁹ members (including an ex-arpillerista). The interviews were semi-structured, focusing on their lives, their connection with the arpillera and the Vicaría, and popular culture in Chile at the time of their departure from the country.

So as to understand the distribution system and buyers of arpilleras, I interviewed the former and present managers for the marketing of Latin American crafts for Oxfam, an NGO (non-governmental organisation) which runs development projects in the Third World. The interviews focused on their selection criteria for crafts, and the way they operated. I also interviewed a Chilean woman who had worked for the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington DC when Isabel Morel (Orlando Letelier's wife) was setting up her arpillera project there; a woman who sold Peruvian arpilleras on the University of Essex campus; two writers on folk art, including Guy Brett; and two buyers of Vicaría

⁹ The Agrupación is the 'Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos' or 'Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared'.

¹⁰ A Chilean diplomat whom Pinochet allegedly had murdered in Washington DC.

arpilleras. Finally, I spoke informally to a professor of Latin American Studies who had bought arpilleras at the time of the dictatorship.

I observed whenever I conducted interviews. In this way I learnt about the kinds of offices in which the sale of arpilleras was organised, the kinds of surroundings in which people who sold and bought arpilleras lived, and the kinds of shops in which arpilleras were put on display.

I also gathered documents during these interviews and visits. People I interviewed allowed me to photocopy articles about the arpilleras. Many of these documents were visual. For example, some of the people I interviewed gave me arpillera post cards, leaflets about arpilleras, or arpillera calendars. A number had arpilleras which they allowed me to photograph. In this way, I was able to begin to build up a visual database of arpilleras, consisting of post cards, photocopied images of arpilleras from calendars, and promotional leaflets and articles, and my own photographs of arpilleras. I would later organise this visual database into a chronology. The owner of the arpillera would supply information about the approximate date the arpillera was made.

Often these various methods were combined. For example, with the purpose of learning more about the distribution system, I visited and observed two Oxfam shops (one in London, one in Oxford) where I photographed an arpillera and asked the shop keepers about it (how much they were going to sell it for and who buys such things). When I interviewed one of the managers of Oxfam Trading during this visit, he lent me a book about arpilleras, which I photocopied. In Oxford I also visited 'Tumi', an upmarket

crafts shop which sells without any solidarity or political considerations, aiming to make a large profit. Here I observed the shop and took photographs.

During the Easter break I went to France and Switzerland. In Lyon I spoke informally to the managers of Artisans du Monde, a crafts shop which had sold arpilleras in the past. I spent some time examining the shop. In Switzerland I interviewed the regional manager of Magasins du Monde, a 'Fair Trade Organisation' which sells Third World goods (including arpilleras) which it buys from producers in economically deprived countries at a 'fair' price. At this interview I was given promotional material about the arpillera, as well as documents about the criteria used for selecting which Third World producers to work with. I also interviewed one of the managers of a Magasins du Monde shop in the small town of Monthey, in the Alps. This woman was Chilean and had introduced the arpillera into Magasins du Monde. I visited the various shops in Monthey, Geneva and Lausanne as well as the warehouse in Lausanne (where the arpilleras were stored), taking photographs of both the shops and the arpilleras within them. In Geneva I interviewed an Amnesty member and nurse who had sold arpilleras from the shantytown of La Victoria, and an Indian lady who had lived in Chile and bought an embroidery of the Macul group which I was to study.

On my way to Chile I interviewed a professor of art history at UCLA about his arpillera collection, took photographs and viewed his slides.

DATA-GATHERING IN CHILE

Planning the Research

When I arrived in Chile my plan was to participant observe and interview. From my interviews and reading in Europe and Seattle (where I studied qualitative research with Howard Becker just before leaving for Chile) I had come up with three basic questions: how did the women change (politically and in terms of their genderawareness)? How did the arpilleras change? And, how did the production and export system work? However, the question which fundamentally guided my choice in methods of data collection was: 'What is going on here?'. I adopted McCall and Simmons' (1969: 1) approach: 'refusing preconceived hypotheses, participant observers do not employ "a priori" standardization of concepts, measures, samples and data, but rather seek to discover and revise these as they learn more about the organization being studied.' Participant observation seemed to be the best way to gain an in-depth understanding of arpillera-making and the concerns and interests of the women today. I decided to supplement this with interviewing, photography, and the analysis of arpilleras. I decided to take a 'grounded theory' (Glaser 1967) approach to my research, finding out what the crucial questions were as I was gathering data, and revising these questions as I went along. My theories would come from the data, rather than from pre-imposed hypotheses or gaps in 'The Literature'.

Because I thought that the groups worked every day (like a sweat shop) I had planned to observe only one group, daily. I also planned to interview everyone I could find connected with the arpillera and as many arpilleristas as possible, on the grounds

that the interviews with arpilleristas would provide me with an understanding of their personal history and changing interests over time. The other interviews would enable me to understand the Vicaría, the meaning of the arpillera for Chileans, and a range of other issues which I had not anticipated. Photography would enable me to record arpilleras of the present and past so as to gain more insight into how they changed over time, and to illustrate my thesis. The analysis of the arpilleras would enable me to learn how the arpilleras had changed over time, and how the arpilleristas', buyers', and Vicaría's attitudes were changing over time.

The plan had to be modified as soon as I had my first interview with the director of the Fundación Solidaridad (as the arpillera and crafts department of the Vicaría is now called) who informed me that the shantytown arpilleristas met irregularly, and at most once a week. This meant that if I observed only one group I would have a good deal of free time, so I decided to observe several groups, and gained access to five initially. I also learnt at that interview that the group most written about, the famous arpilleristas of the Agrupación, no longer worked together making arpilleras. When I realised, by going to the Agrupación , that some of the arpilleristas still met together as a Song Group (which they called 'el Conjunto'), I decided to observe the Song Group on the grounds that it was a way to learn about the concerns of the women and to get to know them personally. Because the group was not making arpilleras, I had to find a shantytown group and eventually gained access to two in the Southern area of Santiago.

Also towards the beginning of my stay, I interviewed a woman who had taught many groups to make arpilleras, and now ran a commercial handicraft-making institution

which trained women in arpillera-making, and workshop management. I decided to observe two groups in her institution because the women being trained had never made political arpilleras and had never been indoctrinated politically, as had the women under the Vicaría. Finally, I observed an embroidery group from the neighbourhood of Macul in the South East of Santiago, because a friend of mine provided access, the group was willing, and it met on a day when I did not have another group meeting. It also served as a comparison group, given that its members did not make arpilleras and had not been connected with the Vicaría, and yet were in a similar class and involved in a similar activity to the arpilleristas.

I observed the arpillera and embroidery groups between July 1995 and July 1996. Although I had planned to stay in Chile for only nine months, I found out that if I stayed three extra months I could acquire Chilean citizenship, which I opted to do. I did not map out a work plan for the months but rather structured my time around participant observation sessions. My time was also structured by the availability of interviewees. The same was true for photographing the arpilleras which were either in people's homes or institutions. I wrote fieldnotes in the evening and following morning (usually). When I was not doing any of the above I was searching for relevant publications in the libraries of the United Nations, various NGOs, and the Archbishopric, or writing a fieldwork diary. In the last three months of my stay, because I had the impression there was still a lot to do, I developed weekly plans with goals for the week (people to interview and libraries to visit).

By the time I left Chile I had data in the form of fieldnotes of six groups¹¹, 136 interviews (open and semi-structured), printed material, responses elicited from visual materials (including photographs and arpilleras from other groups) and several hundred photographs.

Participant Observation

Participant observation, together with interviews, photography, and the analysis of arpilleras, were the main methods of data collection. My central questions in participation observation were: what goes on in an arpillera workshop? and, what are the women's lives like?

Access to the groups was via Winnie, the director of the Fundación Solidaridad. I had read about the Fundación in Agosin (1988). Winnie gave me the names and numbers of two *coordinadora* (a grouping of several arpillera workshops) leaders. One leader (in a shantytown in the East of Santiago) was willing to see me and arranged for the leaders of all nine of the groups in the *coordinadora* to be present at our meeting. I conducted a group interview and asked if I could observe their group. They agreed and said they would contact me when they next met; they did not contact me again and said they were not meeting when I phoned.

I found out that the Vicaría had numerous area offices and by telephoning the Southern office I got the name of an ex-arpillerista from the area, Alicia. She proved an

¹¹ The six became five after a few weeks.

invaluable gatekeeper to the groups in the South of Santiago. I interviewed her about her work and we got on extremely well. When I asked her to introduce me to a group in the Southern area (she knew all of them), she agreed. A few days later she accompanied me to meet the Villa Sur group of which she used to be a member. I interviewed the group and at the end of the interview asked if I could observe them, explaining my work and answering questions. I emphasised that this involved my being with the group each time it met and asking questions. I then said that I would go outside for fifteen minutes so that they could discuss it if they wished, emphasising that it was OK to say 'no'. They said 'yes'. Their willingness, I was somewhat frustrated to find, appeared to have little to do with the project and to be over-ridingly a function of their subjective response to me as a person and the fact that I had come through their friend Alicia. Whyte (1981) had the same response in Cornerville. I found that the same 'subjectivity' operated in all the groups, as well as in the context of obtaining interviews beyond the groups. With all of the remaining six groups I gained access in the same way. In each, a gatekeeper introduced me to the group (Prisma's director, a mutual friend in the case of the Macul group, and Alicia again in the case of the Santa Adriana group). I had no contact for entry into the Agrupación and so introduced myself. I used the same technique of introducing myself and leaving the room, in each instance.

The presence of a gatekeeper is particularly important in Chile where nepotism is an important part of the culture and where people are not as open to acceptance of total strangers as they are to friends of friends, no matter what their credentials might be.

Access through a 'friend' such as Alicia operated in much the same way as it did for Whyte (1981: 291): 'Well, any nights you want to see anything, I'll take you around. I

can take you to the joints... Just remember that you're my friend. That's all they need to know. I know these places and, if I tell them that you're my friend, nobody will bother you. You just tell me what you want to see, and we'll arrange it'. My relationship with Alicia was not nearly as intense as Doc's with William, but the culture was similar. Although there was no gatekeeper for the Song Group, they had had a very favourable experience with an American anthropologist and identified me with her; one member even pointed out that I was 'the same type as Peg, down to earth'. By late August I was observing six groups.

My self-presentation was as a newly-arrived English student writing a thesis in sociology, on the arpillera. I did not say my mother was Chilean as I knew that Chilean society was deeply divided along class and political lines, and was afraid that the groups would immediately try to place her socio-economically, and realise that I was the daughter of an upper-middle class Chilean whom they would assume (because of her class) was right-wing and a member of the 'enemy camp'. Being foreign gave me a veneer of political neutrality (as far as Chilean politics were concerned) and also prestige (Europeans are looked up to in Chile).

Participant observation involved my going to every group meeting, observing, and answering and asking questions. My aim was, as Emerson (1983: 1) suggests for fieldworkers, to 'enter the ongoing worlds of others and observe'. Although I found it difficult initially because of our different life-stages and backgrounds (see Appendix 2), I participated in conversations as much as possible. I became a more active participant in the group's activities as time went on, in some of the groups but not others. My level of

involvement depended partly on the skill level required. I very soon started to sing with the Agrupación women and helped them very early on in their public performances, giving them feedback on how their voices sounded through the microphones and holding their coats and bags whilst they performed.



Participant observation with the Song Group: a rehearsal

It took me longer to join the ladies of the Sta. Adriana group in their sewing, partly because I thought that I would be asking too much of them if I asked them to spend time teaching me. I did eventually ask them how to sew two basic stitches and how to make the *monos*. I began to sew their sun's rays and figures' dresses, hands, eyes and mouths and progressed, in the last two months of fieldwork to making my own arpilleras. With the Místicas group (within Prisma), I helped with gluing arpilleras onto card and fairly early on made my own small arpillera, followed by two more arpilleras in the course of my stay. I did not make or help to make embroideries for the Macul group because they had said that they did not want to teach the technique to anyone for fear of competition. I did help to cut cloth on the few occasions when they did this, however, and

helped them sell. I did not help make anything with the women of the 'Peñiwén' group, also within Prisma. They were producing high-quality work and I did not think I could learn to sew as they did without slowing my teacher down with her work. Moreover, like the Macul group, this group did not seem to expect or want me to participate. When the groups took a break for tea I involved myself as much as possible in preparing and cleaning up. Two groups remarked this upon with pleasure. My efforts to help came from the idea that the researcher should 'give back' to the researched, from whom she gains so much. However, my attempts at reciprocity were not always successful (see Appendix 3). My rationale for participating in the activities of the group in a general sense, where I did, was that in doing so I would learn more about the activity. I followed Emerson's (1983: 1) advice to participate in the system of organised activities and feel subject to the code of moral regulations.

Some of the groups met at other times than their usual meetings. The Agrupación, for example, went to ceremonies for disappeared people at the cemetery and gave public performances. The Macul group sold at a Christmas market, and exhibited in the Ministry of Education. The religious group went to one of the members' sea-side homes for the day. I participated in all such events, on the grounds that 'As ethnographers, we are interested in those networks of social situations where the same group shares in the activities' (Spradley 1980: 43). There were events to which the group did not invite me. The Macul group, for example, met on a Saturday to distribute the money earned from the artisans' fair and did not tell me about their meeting (probably because meetings about money matters were usually conflict-ridden). Ada, the leader of the Sta. Adriana group met with the *coordinadora* once or twice and did not tell me about this, even

though I had requested permission to go beforehand. It is likely that there were such meetings in other groups. I attended all the meetings I knew about and was physically able to attend, conscientiously for the duration of a year, except for nine days' holiday which I gave myself in May 1996. I continued in this way with all the groups, except for the Villa Sur group which I left after three months because I felt they resented my presence.

In one group I had a key informant. Ada of the Santa Adriana group took it upon herself to educate me about 'the poor', telling me about the lives of the exploited saltpetre miners in the North, and of life in the población today. She gave me a tour of the población, describing the various institutions and pointing out the murals, and informed me on many occasions about such problems as the lack of health services or adequate roads. Not only did she inform; she helped me gather data by bringing me (unsolicited) documents, newspaper articles and photographs. When one of the women in the group did not want to be interviewed and I phoned Ada, feeling depressed, she offered to try and persuade the woman in question. Her role was of collaborator and friend. Key informants sometimes adopt this colluding role because of instant mutual respect or personal chemistry similar to that which Whyte (1981) alludes to as existing between himself and Doc, and this was probably the case with us. Her own generous nature may also have played a role, as might her feminist sympathies (she was impressed that a young woman wanted to become a professor), her enjoyment of discussions with me (for example, about local phenomena such as popular religion), and her broad-mindedness (accepting of deviation from the local 'norm', be it in the form of homosexuality in a friend of hers, or my foreign-ness).

Participant observation has its limitations as a method of data gathering for some topics. In the earliest stages, it can prove unhelpful for learning about the relations between group members, for example. As the following extract of fieldnotes of 30th August 1995 reveals, I at first perceived the Macul group of embroiderers as harmonious in its intra-group relations, whereas quite the opposite was true:

'In fact, they often discuss these bureaucratic things, giving each other hints about how they work or how to get around the problems. It is a very sweet group indeed'.

Whilst the group did give each other hints, they were far more pleasant to each other during my first weeks than later. Catalina (the leader) told me that after a few weeks she had told the group that they should behave naturally because they were giving a false impression and 'Jacqueline has come to study us as we really are'. The facade was eventually be dropped. Nevertheless, even in those early weeks, participant observation did yield valuable information about many other aspects of the group, such as its system of operating on a practical level.

Interviews

I carried out 136 interviews, most of them semi-structured. The aim of the interviews was to understand the arpillera institutions, groups and distribution outlets; the origins of the arpillera; the institutions external to the groups but having an influence on them; the impression the arpillera made on people; and the arpilleristas themselves. This involved me interviewing not just the women in my groups but also the employees of the

Vicaría, Prisma and other arpillera institutions, the owners of shops and market stalls selling arpilleras, people connected with the origins of the arpillera (Violeta Parra's daughter and the embroiderers of Isla Negra), leaders and members of right-wing women's movements and institutions (e.g. Pinochet's wife and the head of Poder Femenino), leaders of left-wing feminist movements (including feminist NGOs), directors of human rights institutions, and anyone else connected with the arpillera, such as a photographer who had photographed people holding an arpillera in the funeral march for the priest André Jarlan (who had been shot by soldiers), a clandestine resistance fighter, a Chilean exile's wife visiting from Belgium, and an actress who had worked together with the arpilleristas to create a play about them. I used a snow-ball sample in most cases, but had ideas about what sort of people I wanted to interview from the outset.

Basic questions for which I wanted to solicit answers during interviews were: did the women develop a political consciousness and become politically active through the making of arpilleras, and how? Did the women develop an awareness of gender inequality through this process, and how? When I was interviewing the women, if these topics did not come up spontaneously, as they often did, I asked them specifically about their involvement in politics and protest, about their husbands' and families' attitudes to their participation in the workshops, and whether there were any changes in the household as a result.

I also asked the women about what they would change in the workshops, what they intended to do in the future, what their motivations and achievements in joining the workshops were, and what form their participation in paid employment and local groups,

took. Background information I solicited covered the age, educational level, number of children and income of the family (by asking how much they spent on clothes, rent and food). All the above questions were items on a checklist which I would only look at the end of the interview. Despite the number of issues on the checklist, most of the interviews were more open than structured. In the first half I let the women talk about whatever aspect of their involvement with arpilleras they pleased, and asked them to tell me more about certain points they themselves brought up. Only when I felt this part had come to an end did I raise the checklist points which had not been covered. I developed the checklist (except for the two basic questions mentioned above) organically, after I had conducted numerous interviews and had a sense of what was important to the women. Interviews with the women were between forty minutes to three hours in length.

I did not begin interviewing the women until approximately two months into the observation because I felt shy about doing so. I also thought that to do so was to turn the women into 'subjects' and myself into a researcher rather than group member, whereas I wanted to be considered a friend and member of the group. Consequently, I felt very ill at ease whenever I asked for an interview, and especially when I asked that it be held in the woman's home (as I always did with the arpilleristas). Although some researchers (e.g. Oakley 1981) believe that hierarchy and distancing can and should be avoided during the interview, by volunteering information asked for, investing one's personal identity in the interaction and via other means, I believed that the context of 'interview' is by definition distancing and imposing of hierarchy. In retrospect, the delay in beginning my individual interviews was favourable. By the time I began the women knew me fairly well and felt comfortable with me. They told me intimate details about their family lives and feelings

about the group. Also, because I had been in the group for some time they could refer to things or people with which I would not have been familiar had I interviewed them in my first weeks.

I also interviewed Vicaría employees, feminists who had worked with the arpilleristas, people who sold arpilleras at stalls, and several other types of people. Most of these interviews were semi-structured.

I conducted a small number of group interviews, in most cases on the occasion of my first meeting with the group. The group interviews were more restrained than the single interviews, partly because the women were shy of me as a newcomer and in part because many believed that to reveal all one's thoughts to others in the group can bring trouble¹². This guardedness characterised the group interview with the Song Group whose members held back a substantial amount of information and feelings, even though they had already known me for several weeks. They did not tell me the truth, for example, about their negative feelings about the Vicaría. I believe this is mainly because they were not open about their feelings amongst each other, as there was considerable distrust and dislike within the group. As Hedges (1985: 74) points out, people sometimes feel constrained in what they say in front of their peers. This very limitation, however, provided data about the group's attitudes and interactions. Other than group and individual interviews, I recorded data from many informal conversations, both telephone and face-to face.

¹² An ancient Arab proverb along the lines of 'Don't tell all you know, don't show all you feel... or you will find yourself in trouble' hangs in many houses in Chile and coincides with what I perceived as a culture of indirectness and avoidance of openness.

Photography

I took between four and five hundred photos, of arpilleras, arpilleristas and any other events (such as political acts) in which arpilleristas were active. In photographing arpilleras I aimed to gather data about the change in the arpillera over time and between groups, both for my own analysis and for illustration in the dissertation. In taking photos of the women, I aimed to have documents which I could use in my dissertation to give my readers a sense of the group meetings and activities, and the distribution outlets (shops and market stalls). A photograph, I felt, could provide an immediate sense of place and people, making the experience more vivid for the reader. A photograph is not a neutral record of 'reality' but a framed image, which provides the spectator with a 'central perspective' (Crawford and Turton, 1992: 2). Even though the photograph distorts as it represents, giving a particular angle of vision, it can effectively evoke aspects of a scene, such as people's expressions, the distance between them, their activities and others' responses to them. A photograph of a visual art work can provide a very vivid sense of the work in a way that text sometimes cannot.

Photographs complement written description and can support analysis. They can also aid the researcher in the analytic process. For example, the idea that the arpillera served to integrate the women as active 'citizens' in a broad group of people who were against Pinochet (see Chapter 6), occurred to me not as a result of a steady process of analysis but almost fortuitously when, in an art gallery one day, I saw the photograph of

the huge march for the funeral of André Jarlan. I forgot about the idea until much later when, in the thick of analysis, I found the same theme in my interviews, remembered the photo, and everything seemed suddenly to fall into place.

At first I took photos only at public events where journalists would have been tolerated. Such events included the Song Group's singing in homage to a disappeared person, and an official opening ceremony for the Macul Mothers' Centre at which the Macul embroiderers met. I felt too shy to ask my groups to let me photograph them at work, for several weeks. As with the individual interviews, I thought that this would widen the gap between us and that it was demeaning to the women, putting them in the position of zoo-creatures. I never overcame these feelings during my stay and always felt very uncomfortable as I took the photos. The women's reaction was not positive but nor was it hostile. During a demonstration two women of the Agrupación even asked me to photograph them. Towards the end of my stay I asked some of the women to take photos and they seemed to enjoy this. I made copies to give to the women, and they were always pleased with this.

I took approximately four hundred pictures of arpilleras. Several of my interviewees (those who were not members of the groups) had arpilleras in their homes and offices and allowed me to photograph them. I photographed every arpillera I came across as well as the art works which influenced the arpillera: the arpilleras of Isla Negra and Violeta Parra, and Panamanian 'molas', About half of these arpillera photographs were in slide form (for the quality and future teaching purposes) and half were prints.

¹³ Appliqué art works.

Photo Elicitation

I practised photo elicitation with my groups, showing them photos of the arpilleras. I also showed them real arpilleras of other groups, and a catalogue of Violeta Parra's arpilleras¹⁴. In doing so I aimed to find out the conventions which ruled their work. Their reactions to art work, and comparisons with their own work were revealing in this sense. They often, for example, pointed out the differences between the arpilleras of other groups and their own ('we don't do mountains like that') and expressed their feelings about them (e.g. 'I like that!'). I also showed my groups visual material because they enjoyed seeing it and because I thought it might give them ideas for their own work. The catalogue of Violeta Parra's arpilleras provoked comments about the colours and subject matter (covering Chilean history and working-class religious practices).

The creating of a visual database of arpilleras

I put my photographs, post cards, and photocopies of arpilleras in chronological order and analysed the development of the arpillera over time. What the arpilleras depicted was an indication of what the women were thinking about, what the buyers wanted, and what the Vicaría (or other intermediary) was telling the women to do, over the twenty year period. I was able to check my conclusions by asking questions in

interviews. The arpilleras also served as a check for what I had been told in interviews and during participant observation sessions. For example, Ada's statement that her group had participated in Women's Day marches was supported by the fact that an arpillera she had made, depicted and enormous Women's Day march. The analysis of the arpilleras was particularly useful for learning about the shape radicalisation and de-radicalisation took, in the women.

Documentary Evidence

I collected and read newspaper articles, magazine articles, clandestine publications of resistance groups, arpillera workshop handbooks, Vicaría documents, the documents of other groups (e.g. the Macul group's collection of articles about their exhibitions), promotional pamphlets for the sale of arpilleras, accounts of arpillera-group and Vicaría meetings, speeches of arpillera teachers when they cam to teach arpillera-making in the US, and both academic and non-academic books and articles about the arpilleras, the situation in Chile, the resistance movement, and the women's movement. I used these data for my analysis as well as to familiarise myself with the subject in the early stages of my research. Many of these documents were given to me by interviewees; others I gathered in the Vicaría archives, and NGO, United Nations, and national libraries. Finally, I used video as a source of data, watching approximately five videos on the arpillera and a number on related subjects such as the resistance theatre, or life in the

¹⁴Violeta Parra was a Chilean folklorist who made embroidered tapestries which are widely believed to have inspired the arpilleras I study here.

shantytowns. My purpose in doing so was to gather information about any aspect of the arpillera, resistance, and working-class life.

The Choice of Method

The above methods of data collection are ethnographic. I preferred ethnography over other methods such as the survey because the data from participant observation are particularly rich and because my approach was exploratory. I did not go into the field with a precise idea of what aspect of my potentially vast topic - the sociology of an art form - I wanted to limit myself to. Participant observation afforded the opportunity to collect data on many aspects of the topic, to begin with. Qualitative research which 'tries not to rigidly structure the direction of enquiry and learning within a priori definitions' (Walker 1985: 46) suited these needs. I also used participant observation because I believed that to understand the social world of the arpilleristas it was necessary to be with them, listening and watching, as they worked; to experience a portion of their lives. I believed, as Emerson (1983: 15) suggests, that interpretative understanding is acquired through regular and intimate involvement maintained over time. Whilst the understanding acquired through such involvement is in large part a product of the researcher's subjective self (see Appendix 2), it is closer to the experience of those studied than methods involving less contact. A further reason for my choice of participant observation over and above the survey method for example, was that I wanted my 'subjects' to define in large part what was important or interesting about arpillera-making. As Burgess (1984:

79) points out: 'Participant observation and observation give access to the meanings which participants assign to social situations'.

My preference for semi-structured or unstructured interviews over structured interviews was similarly motivated: my study was exploratory and I did not wish to limit my questions to one or two topics or hypotheses. I wanted take my interviewee's lead in deciding what topics were most important. Furthermore, as some topics (e.g. the disappearance story) were potentially very upsetting for interviewees, delicacy and flexibility were necessary in the timing, tone and wording of the question, in consideration of my interviewee's feelings. Therefore, the main assumptions about the subject, which lie behind the ethnographic techniques I used, is that it is potentially very rich and can be made to address a large number of questions.

I built up a visual database of arpilleras because I was interested in the development of the arpillera and the women's consciousness over time. I worked on the assumption that the images in the arpilleras would reflect to some degree and in modified form, the arpilleristas' thinking, but also the concerns of the Vicaría and buyers.

ANALYSIS AND WRITING

I began analysing arpilleras in Europe, and had built up a substantial database by the time I had reached Seattle. In Seattle I carried out my first analysis of the change in the arpillera over time and the corresponding change in the women's thinking.

I analysed most of my interviews with arpilleristas a few weeks after conducting them (not sooner, unfortunately). The broad questions which I took with me into the field did not change substantially, although my levels of interest in them did. I became less interested in the arpilleras themselves and more interested in the women and how they had changed in the process of making arpilleras. I pursued issues which interested or puzzled me in individual interviews by asking further questions at participant observation sessions (or listening for these topics), and checked observation insights at interviews. For example, from talk at workshop meetings I developed the theory that the group was the only space for meaningful communication for the women who otherwise lived fairly isolated lives. By listening to talk about whom they had interacted with over the last week and by asking at interviews whether they talked to people other than the group members on an intimate level, I was able to confirm my theory (with reservations). I also checked the insights from both interviews and observation, by examining the photographic chronology of arpilleras I had built up. Four months into the fieldwork I started writing short vignettes of analysis based on insights such as that mentioned above, finding that they helped me clarify my ideas and the questions I needed to ask. Interactions with my advisors helped at this point.

In this way, I took a grounded theory (Glaser 1967) approach to my analysis; my theory came from the data. I used what other people had written where relevant, drawing on a variety of 'literatures' to do so. I therefore used a more inductive than deductive approach. However, pure inductivity, I believe, is a myth. The routes the researcher could pursue in analysing a site as rich as the arpillera workshops are infinite; she will focus

unintentionally or intentionally on what interests her most (see Appendix 2). For example, I could have focused more on the concrete process of arpillera-making but chose instead to write about other matters. I pursued unexpected avenues when I met with surprises, but these avenues were usually connected with what interested me initially.

Finally, I came to Seattle to write my dissertation. I did not code for a long time, writing instead from 'what I knew', following Howard Becker's suggestion (personal conversation). This was helpful for starting the writing process but I regretted not having coded earlier. Coding can modify 'what you know' and also provides a means of inserting quotations at this early writing stage. Several months into the writing stage I coded all my interviews and fieldnotes and used the computer application 'Access' because it allowed easy retrieval of data by key word and was very user-friendly. I developed the codes 'from the base of the categories and concepts of the research participants' (Jones 1985: 59). Although my chapter topics were already defined from the 'writing what I knew' stage, I used the codes as a source of new topics. Themes that came up frequently (e.g. solidarity) merited further analysis. I also used my codes to check my data with reference to 'what I knew' and alter or add subtlety to what I had already written. I also used the codes to search the data for further evidence and counterevidence. For several weeks I wrote short vignettes of analysis because I was intimidated by the idea of beginning to write the real thing. This did not prove very useful but at least I was able to include some of these vignettes in the first draft. I finished writing my dissertation in Berkeley, on Halloween, 1998.

CHAPTER 2: THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION

Chile had had a stable parliamentary government for four decades before the 1973 Coup d'Etat.

CHILE UNDER ALLENDE

Allende became the world's first elected Marxist president in 1970. Before him, the Christian Democrat Frei had carried out agrarian reform but his policies did not affect the urban poor in a significant way (Touraine 1973: 16). Allende was the head of a coalition of left-wing¹ parties called the 'Unidad Popular', or 'Popular Unity'. The Popular Unity had at its core the Socialist Party and the Soviet-oriented Communist Party of Chile, but also included other left-wing parties.

Under Allende's rule Chile became increasingly state-controlled, so that by 1973 the state managed most large investments. Allende expropriated and nationalised the copper industry (which had been in the hands of American companies), accelerated agrarian reform, and nationalised the large textile, coal and steel industries (Touraine 1973: 13,16). He introduced changes to benefit the poor; developing local health councils as part of the National Health Service (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 23) and creating the system of 'Groups of supply and price control' to ensure the distribution and price control of food on a neighbourhood level.

By 1972 Chile faced many economic problems: stagnant production, decreased exports and private-sector investment, exhausted financial reserves, widespread strikes, rising inflation, food shortages, a thriving black market, and domestic unrest.

International lines of credit from the United States and Western Europe had completely dried up. There was also much political unrest. Many 'gremios' or associations of people in trades including professionals, went on strike, and there were numerous factory takeovers by workers in the industrial belts around Santiago.

Women in the Allende Period

Allende encouraged women to share the revolutionary goals of the Popular Unity which, on their realisation, would carry within them the goals of women 'in essence born to be mother'. He also encouraged the men of the coalition to bring their womenfolk out of the home and into the street, to demonstrations and marches (Boyle 1993: 158). The Popular Unity created a number of policies which favoured women. It voted into law a bill giving unmarried women with families the family allotments they had been denied in the past, set out programmes to deal with childcare, nutrition, and maternity provision, and proposed that parliament create a Ministry of the Family.

Despite these progressive measures, women were not very active in life outside the home. Very few women worked and those who did were concentrated in the feminine

As the meanings of "right" and "left" wing vary, I define "left wing" as Marxist in ideology, and "right wing" as pro-capitalism.

professions. In the 1970 census little more than 19 per cent of women over twelve had paying jobs outside the home, compared with 69 per cent of men (Mattelart 1976: 294).

Nor were women politically active, until the end of the Allende regime. After suffrage in 1949, the women's movement had fallen apart and women had dropped out of political activity beyond the vote (Mattelart 1976). In 1972 women began to mobilise against Allende. Women of the right from the high and middle bourgeoisie, working class, and petite bourgeoisie regarded Allende as a threat to the order of society, longestablished moral codes and to the sanctity of the family. 'Poder Femenino' ('Feminine Power') and the Women's Front organised in mid 1972 to 'save our homes and families from Communism'. Poder Femenino managed the famous 'March of the empty pots', across party lines, to shore up the opposition. The marchers, mostly right-wing women from the upper and middle class, with their maids, demonstrated by banging pots, to protest against what they saw as a lack of food.

Despite this activism, for the most part, women did not publicly question gender inequality: 'Under Allende's Popular Unity Government women had been active in working-class organisations without questioning their own subordinate role in society' (Rowe and Schelling 1993: 188).

The Coup

The Coup came about partly as a result of the perceived threat and fear of looming chaos, economic collapse, imminent social unrest and destabilisation. As far as the right wing was concerned, the country was exposed to the treacheries of the Marxist regime and in a state which approximated civil war (Touraine 1973: 238). On the day of the Coup, 11th September 1973, Allende was killed or committed suicide (debate still rages over this issue) and the presidential palace was bombed. Immediately after the Coup food appeared once again on the shop shelves.

CHILE UNDER PINOCHET

The Junta consisted of the heads of the air force (Leigh), ground army (Pinochet), Navy (Merino) and police force (Mendoza). It presented itself as an agent of reconstruction of the nation, its discourse centring around getting rid of 'terrorists' and calming down the people whilst looking after their material well-being; this was couched in terms of looking after the herd whilst eliminating the black sheep (Touraine 1973: 262). All that was Marxist and foreign was to be eliminated (Touraine 1973: 240). 'The men of the UP are continuously presented as thieves, self-indulgent individuals and bandits' (Touraine 1973: 259). The Junta also made constant reference to the divine mission of the armed forces in their defence of patriotic values and their image as saviours. These promises to restore order and stability won the support of significant sections of the middle and upper classes and right-wing movements.

Pinochet's authoritarian-capitalist model was based on values often referred to as Catholic traditionalism (a firm belief in religion, family, private property, and nation). His government adhered to the guiding principle of United States policy in Latin America, the doctrine of National Security. This doctrine, developed in the wake of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, assigned the armed forces of Latin America the role of safeguarding internal security and waging war against 'subversive elements' within their frontiers. In the eyes of Pinochet and the Junta anyone who peacefully opposed the military's policies or who shared the ideology and traditions of the adversary subverted the true Chilean social and moral order.

Political repression was severe. Political parties were banned, parliament closed down and the Junta, assisted by legislative commissions, carried on legislative functions. The judges and prosecutors of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals were appointed by the president from a list of nominees proposed by the Supreme Court. The courts began to deny the amparo proceedings which people began to present in the weeks following the Coup. The army took over all television and radio and eliminated most political magazines (both left and right wing) and attacked the shantytowns. (Touraine 1973: 240).

Pinochet developed a new constitution in 1981, approved by a plebiscite. The 1981 document (replacing the 1925 one) placed the administration of the state in the hands of the president (voted by the Junta as Pinochet) who was permitted to hold office until 1990. It allowed for a transition from military dictatorship to an authoritarian

regime, until 1989 when presidential elections would take place, giving the president the option of remaining in office until 1997.

Political Parties

Many of the leaders of political parties were sent in exile abroad. However, many continued to function in a clandestine fashion and played an important part in the later protests. In 1980 Pinochet began to ease his severe repression of political activism (and in 1981 some exiles were allowed to return), but political activity was still heavily restricted. Ex-party leaders and members began to form into groups more openly, creating official parties before the 1989 plebiscite.

For the 1989 plebiscite there were two major campaigns: the 'Campaign for the Yes vote' (in favour of Pinochet) and the 'Campaign for the No vote'. Political parties, working alongside survival and human rights organisations, were active in the Campaign for the No vote² which won the plebiscite. Political parties continued to be active in the general elections for president and parliament planned for December 1989. The opposition parties continued united in the 'Concertación de Partidos Políticos' (Coalition of Political Parties), with Aylwin as candidate (Schuurman 1992: 92).

² So as to support the campaign for the No vote and to increase their influence, many social organisations joined forces in June 1988 in the 'Acuerdo por el No' or 'Agreement for the No Vote'.

^{&#}x27;The unemployed were a heterogeneous group: skilled workers and previously 'inactive' sectors (women, youth, elderly) without skills or wage-work experience. Men were the main victims. Union activists were the first to be sacked but as the 'shock' austerity measures took effect unemployment became a more widespread problem (Bunster check). Men and women workers who had been imprisoned or who had leftist tendencies were also unable to find work.

The Economy

The ideology of the free market was the basis of Pinochet's economic policy. Indirect foreign investments increased, the export sector grew, government services were privatised and there were wage restrictions. The numbers out of work doubled in the first year of military rule³. In 1975 the introduction of the neo-liberal economic package was accelerated. Government expenditures decreased 27 per cent, affecting education and health in particular (Schuurman 1992: 33)⁴. This led to first economic crisis, with negative economic growth of 12.9 per cent in 1975. One year later, real wages were 62 per cent of the 1970 level (Schuurman 1992: 31). By 1977 the national unemployment rate stood at an estimated 18 per cent.

The second major economic crisis was in 1981-82, when GNP showed a negative growth rate of 15.8 per cent. Unemployment rates grew from 17 per cent in 1981 to 35 per cent in 1983 and real minimum wages went down by 21 per cent. (Schuurman 1992: 31), so that by 1983 an estimated 30 per cent of all Chilean families were living in 'extreme' poverty (in the sense that they depended on income which if spent solely on food would be inadequate to obtain the necessary nutrients and calories to sustain life). In the shantytowns unemployment was as high as 80 per cent (Chuchryk 1989: 152). A 'pobladora' commented:

⁴ This resulted in a decline in the standard of living for low income groups. (Schuurman 1992: 33)

'The most serious problem was unemployment. The factory closed down and nearly all the men who lived here were left without work. Before, you could always get odd jobs in private houses, cleaning windows or gardening, but in the early 1980s there was nothing. We were all in debt. Many of us had had our electricity cut off and we were connecting to the streetlights. This meant you kept your door locked all the time and lived in fear of the electricity man.' (Fisher, 1993: 28)

Malnutrition, child prostitution, absenteeism from school, drug addiction, neurosis and alcoholism affected the inhabitants of shantytowns (Bunster 1984: 65).

However, there were some economic successes and 1976-79 was a boom period. In 1977 there was an enormous inflow of foreign loans and investments. Economic growth rates improved, unemployment fell and real wages began to rise. The late Eighties were also economically buoyant. In 1989 GNP grew 8.5 per cent (Schuurman 1992: 32). Unemployment began gradually to fall during the late Eighties.

For the majority of the population the monetarist policies meant deteriorating social services, a drastic fall in living standards, and growing unemployment and underemployment. Families responded by reordering the economic participation and roles of the majority of family members; the man was no longer the sole provider of money and in many cases (as with the arpilleristas) he no longer worked, and the woman provided the household income. The family also engaged in reducing spending, selling of household utensils, expanding of the family unit, working in PEM and POJH (government 'make work' programmes), and exercising relations of mutual support among relatives and neighbours (Leiva and Petras 1986: 19). Meanwhile, the rich got richer: in the past decade the top 40 per cent of the income ladder increased their share in

GNP from 71.8 per cent to 77 per cent, while the bottom 40 per cent went down from 15 per cent to 11.8 per cent (Schuurman 1992: 32).

The 'Solidarity Organisations'

Organisations set up to cope with the economic crisis and resistance mushroomed in the shantytowns; they were known as 'solidarity organisations', 'organisations for survival' or 'popular economic organisations'. Examples include soup kitchens⁵, shopping collectives, collective gardens, (see Chuchryk 1989 for more details), knitting groups, the collecting and selling of old clothing, handicraft and artisan workshops (including arpillera groups), health groups, and unemployment groups. There were also organisations of a more activist nature, demanding adequate housing and utilities for example. By 1987, 220000 people in Santiago were members of solidarity organisations - 16 per cent of all *pobladores* (Oxhorn 1994: 57). There were 494 organisations in 1982 and 702 in 1984 (Leiva and Petras 1986: 20), and most were in Santiago. Towards the end of the Eighties some of these organisations united in a number of *coordinadoras* whose task was to co-ordinate relations with NGOs and develop a more activist attitude towards the state.

Some of the members of the survival organisations were local leaders with experience in political and social work, some had participated in land seizures or protests for resources in the shantytowns, some had had trade union experience, church

experience or Mothers' Centre experience, but many had not been active outside the home at all. Most had never worked in a political party, although they came into contact with activists through their work. 90 per cent of the members of these organisations were women (Schild 1994: 59). Many came into contact with the organisations by coming to the chapels and parish buildings in their shantytowns when they needed help, typically because they were unemployed, or faced health problems, their houses had been raided, they had suffered a disappearance or because they felt afraid. The massive searches and arrests after the Coup left entire communities paralysed by fear (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 7).

The survival organisations had primarily economic goals but also acted as a focus for political organising and self-education, as well as a means of self-empowerment (Chuchryk 1989: 154). They were networks of resistance to military rule. Unlike most grass-roots women's organisations in the past, they also showed a concern for gender issues. Several shantytown dwellers refer to their participation in organisations as 'being born again' because they felt they were living more fully, learning more skills and becoming less afraid. Aida Moreno who participated in one such organisation in Santiago, said 'Once we started to participated in the organisations, that huge fear and disorientation we felt began to go away' (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 39).

The Shantytowns

⁵ Food was often donated by the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, and mothers and volunteers of church

In Chile, many of the poor live in *poblaciones* or working-class neighbourhoods and shantytowns, in cities. The numbers reached as many as two million in Santiago during the Pinochet era (Fisher 1993: 18). Many of the *poblaciones* had begun as squatter camps in the Forties, when Santiago's newly established industries offered the hope of employment to the rural poor (Fisher 1993: 22). The government gave the squatter settlement inhabitants only limited support and in most cases they had to build their homes, communities and infrastructure themselves. In the 1960s there were a number of illegal land seizures led by the Communists. However, many *poblaciones* were also legally and peacefully settled by Frei's 'Operación Sitio' (Operation Site) programme.

From the mid-Fifties onwards, the *pobladores* were frequently the targets of political recruitment. However, in general *pobladores* remained rather distant from parties and identified with no political prospect beyond their concrete aspirations. As a group they were characterised by a lack of cohesiveness and reluctance to identify themselves and each other as a groups with a significant role or meaning (Salman 1994: 14). Although it is often assumed that all the *poblaciones* were hotbeds of resistance to the dictatorship, in reality, levels of combativeness varied greatly, and the poorest *poblaciones* were not the most combative.

The urban poor are conventionally seen as non-integrated or marginalised. As Neuhouser's (1989) research on gender in the shantytowns of Recife in North East Brazil shows, however, this is based on little evidence. Certain neighbourhoods are dominated by large kin networks which provide mutual aid. People within the networks exchange

organisations participated in the cooking (Chuchryk 1989).

gifts, make loans, share goods and information, and exchange child care. Many participate in evangelical or Catholic groups which provide further opportunities for expanding exchange networks.

Political Repression and Public Reaction

Not only did Pinochet close down political parties, he also passed various laws to prevent people from organising. Public meetings were prohibited and observers were designated for certain meetings. Some neighbourhood organisations were re-organised under military supervision. Trade unions were among the first political organisations targeted for repression and in 1977 new trade union laws were introduced, designed to render the old union organisation ineffective and to formalise the erosion of worker's rights. The closure of community organisations, including the Mothers' Centres, the imprisonment of community, political and union leaders and the replacement of elected representatives in local councils by military supporters left the *pobladores* with no political leadership and no voice in the political system. Pinochet and the military also controlled all large institutions, including universities and the media, all of which was censored.

Immediately after the Coup Chile's main football stadium became the scene of mass murder and torture as some 3000 people were slaughtered or 'disappeared'. For several years afterwards, people were arrested, disappeared, exiled and sent to internal exile in concentration camps within Chile. The regime used torture to force confessions,

elicit information and simply to punish individuals for being members of the 'enemy camp'. There were 30,000 political executions during the regime. Over 100,000 citizens were forced into exile, and 1500 disappeared (Index 1978). In 1974 DINA (the Department of National Intelligence, akin to the Secret Police) was created, later becoming the CNI ('National Centre of Information'), dismantled in 1989. (Schuurman 1992: 33)

The principal victims of the concentration camps, torture, disappearances, executions and imprisonment were manual workers, mostly men (in part because women had always played what were considered marginal or secondary roles in the targeted organisations). The first victims of 'disappearance' were people of different political leanings, followed later by socialists, members of the MIR (an extreme left-wing group), and communists.

Resistance

Since the Thirties the industrial working-class and trade unions had emerged as the leading force in the configuration of popular social movements. However, the locus of popular expression changed with the Coup, when the dictatorship eliminated almost all the mechanisms of mediation between the working-class and the state. With the traditional routes of political expression repressed, new actors began to appear: women and youth began resisting the dictatorship in popular economic organisations, women's

groups and human rights groups. Old actors continued to a limited extent, underground; the factories housed underground political networks, for example.

Different types of actions and mobilisations appeared in the struggle for survival: land seizures for housing; raids on supermarkets and warehouses; raids on passing trucks and trains for fruit and coal bags; utility bill payment strikes and illegal hook-ups; actions at the 'work place' on the part of street vendors and PEM-POJH workers; demonstrations and street actions; and the presentation of demands to the state (Leiva and Petras 1986: 19). Low income neighbourhoods pressed the local authorities for land and housing, the workers pressed for higher wages and changes in labour legislation; and students carried out cultural activities and short rallies (defying government regulations). Some mobilisations were more explicitly political in nature, on the occasion of Labour Day, for example (Garretón 1989). There was an assassination attempt on Pinochet in 1986.

People also tried to take legal action in response to government repression. In 1974 the first massive amparo proceeding for 131 detained-disappeared people was presented at the Courts by the Comité de Cooperación para la Paz. It was paralysed by the Court of Appeals. Most cases presented received the reply that there was no evidence from the police or security organisations that they had been detained, or that the person did not legally exist.

Protests

Before 1983 protests addressed either government abuses or specific concerns of individual socio-economic sectors. They included protests against assassinations, detentions, torture, and disappearances, and took the form of fasts, hunger strikes and quick, limited public rallies. They were isolated, erratic and brief, rarely directed at anyone in particular, and many had the institutional protection of the Church (Garretón 1989).

The first large-scale, nation-wide protests began in May 1983 and took place on a monthly basis⁶. These national protests were 'almost exclusively meant as a protest against the miserable living conditions of the *pobladores* themselves. They were not accompanied by a political strategy' (Schuurman 1992: 38). They consisted of unarmed students, workers and shantytown residents, demanding an end to the dictatorship. In the shantytowns people went into their back yards or gardens at a given hour, and banged pots; some also marched. At the same time there were political rallies, marches, campaigns for human rights and 'the right to live'. During the protests massive military operations were carried out in the *poblaciones* as troops in full combat gear, supported by helicopters and armoured vehicles, fought against protesters armed with stones and home-made weapons.

In the 1983 protests the working-class and middle-class allied. As the protests went on, the level of violence increased because of the regime's effective response.

Because of this and because of strategic divisions within the opposition (particularly

⁶ The first one, in May 1983, was led by the Copper Workers' Confederation (Chile's most powerful union). In subsequent ones trade unions continued to play the main role in providing a united call to all social sectors to mobilise.

differences in goals and strategies once the parties assumed leadership of the protests) the momentum of these protests began to diminish. With time, the violence of the *pobladores* in the protests isolated them from other socio-economic groups. The middle-class began to drop out of the protest movement and the main protesters became students and urban *pobladores*. The protests continued with varying levels of intensity throughout 1984 (when there was a general strike and the government declared a state of siege) until 1986. By 1986 there was general exhaustion amongst the protesters and few continued with the direct confrontation. By 1987 a small minority of *pobladores* were organised or active. From 1987 to 1989 collective action by the popular sectors beyond the community level was increasingly dominated by political parties.

During the protests a certain amount of political concessions began, such as allowing some exiles to return and opposition journals to be published.

The Lead-Up to the Plebiscite

The increasing political freedom from 1985 onwards induced a substantial proportion of the leaders of social movements to step over to positions within political parties (Schuurman 1992: 39).

By 1986 different organisations were beginning to group together to oust Pinochet. In 1986 a national committee of more than 200 organisations (the 'Asamblea de la Civilidad' or 'Civil Assembly') demanded the return of democracy in a document

called 'The Demand of Chile', uniting the specific demands of the various social sectors. Part of this document was the 'Pliego de la Mujeres' or 'Demands of Women') which was drafted by representatives of women's organisations within the assembly (Schuurman 1992: 89). The Assembly also organised boycotts and called for a successful national strike in July and September 1986 (resulting in the state of siege).

After the state of siege in 1986 parties and politicians increasingly distanced themselves from the insurrection scenario advocated by radical participants in and observers of protests. The opposition parties feared losing the support of the middle classes and decided that it was more realistic to try to remove the dictator by electoral means.

In 1986 the Committee for Free Elections was formed, advocating a strategy for transition counterpoised to that provided for in Pinochet's 1980 Constitution. It became the basis for the 'Coalition for the No Vote', a coalition of Christian Democrat and moderate socialist parties which eventually managed to mobilise the majority of Chileans to vote against Pinochet's remaining in office ('No' to Pinochet). This coalition was formed in February 1988 and led by the Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin. In the October 1988 Pinochet was defeated in the plebiscite in which he was the only candidate, and in which he sought to maintain himself in power for another ten years:

^{&#}x27;Once a commitment was made to challenge the military regime in the 1988 plebiscite, political parties came to dominate citizens' participation in politics. Their virtual monopoly on participation was subsequently reinforced by the opposition's victory in the plebiscite and the resultant elections for president and parliamentarians, in which political parties on the right also played a prominent role. Political party elites were once again at the forefront of Chilean politics.' (Oxhorn 1994: 55).

When Pinochet lost the plebiscite, the military regime lost all claims to legitimacy and the way was opened for the transition to constitutional rule. The negotiations that followed were almost exclusively a military-political party affair and many of the new organisations had little say about the terms of the transition. The military tried to retain the greatest possible political influence over the future government. The Coalition became the 'Concertación' for elections in December 1989. Patricio Aylwin won the elections and Pinochet remained as commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

Non-Governmental Organisations

The Eighties saw a proliferation of NGOs. They were the main channels by which foreign donors gave money to social movements and the economically deprived (Schuurman 1992: 46). They were politicised to different degrees, but had in common the fact that they were concerned with poverty and had links to informal groups in shantytowns. Many of these NGOs were concerned with gender issues. As a consequence of the UN Women's Decade, women's NGOs could count on international financial support for their activities. There were NGOs which only worked for and with women and mixed NGOs which also worked for other target groups but have a special women's programme (Schuurman 1992: 96).

The Situation of Women

Education

In 1979 approximately half of all men and women had completed primary school and approximately one quarter had finished their secondary education (Chaney 1979: 60).

Women and the Law

Many laws concerning women were archaic. For example, until 1989 'potestad marital' gave a husband rights over his wife and her property. Divorce and abortion were, and continue to be, illegal. When Pinochet took over, many of the gains of the previous years, such as maternity benefits and labour rights, were revoked. Employers were no longer required to provide or subsidise childcare for female employees, although day care had rarely been accessible to working-class women. A new law made it possible for employers to fire pregnant employees. The privatisation of education reduced the number of day care centres and increased the cost of those that existed. The laws that governed working hours did not extend to the realm of domestic service.

Women and poverty

The widespread unemployment affected women severely, forcing them into the labour market because their husbands were unemployed. Many began to work for the first time, mostly in the informal sector because they were unable to find wage-earning occupations. They distributed their work time among diverse activities; many became

street vendors, beggars and prostitutes. Women's labour force participation rose from 25.2 per cent of all women aged 15 and over in 1976 to 28.2 per cent in 1985. Because they had to work, their daughters were often taken out of school.

Women became increasingly pauperised. The number of women heads of household of household grew, so that by 1988 one in five families was headed by a woman (Fisher 1993: 195). This was partly because of the migration of men in search of work and partly because of the difficulty men had in adjusting to the new balance of power in the home. Women heads of household were amongst the poorest in the *poblaciones* and single motherhood was not seen as an attractive option. 40 per cent of the homes in the poorest areas were run by women in 1982 (Valenzuela 1991: 168).

CEMA-Chile

One of the ways the regime tried to gain the support of women was through CEMA-Chile, a network of mothers' centres whose members were *pobladoras* who produced craft work which was sold in special CEMA shops. CEMA-Chile's origins were the Mothers' Centres (community-based, grass-roots organisations) formed during the Frei government but closed down by Pinochet when he took over. The original democratic structure was replaced by an administrative hierarchy when the Centres were put under the control of Pinochet's wife, Lucía Hiriart, and used to promote the military's vision of women as defenders of the family and the nation. All traces of their former

LA MUJER CHILLENA Y SU COMPROMIISO IHIISTORICO



social and campaigning roles were removed (Fisher 1993: 27). The volunteers who ran them were usually the wives of military officers.

CEMA-Chile members were women of working-class neighbourhoods and numbered 230,000 (in more than 10000 CEMAs) in 1983 (Schuurman 1992: 95).

Through CEMA-Chile 'women were taught to be good wives, mothers and homemakers through training programs that enabled them to improve their domestic performance' (Valenzuela 1991: 165).

This cover of a government publication about CEMA-Chile, features a woman is faceless woman, perhaps reflecting the government's image of women.

In October 1973 Pinochet created the National Secretariat of Women, with his wife as director. It channelled civilian female support for the regime, so as to promote government programmes aimed at the poorest sectors. Like CEMA-Chile, it aimed to indoctrinate politically. Economic support was provided to women in low-income areas by uniformed female volunteers (middle and upper-class women). 'The basic philosophy spread by CEMA, and supported by the National Secretariat of Women was that a 'truly patriotic' mother submits herself without reserve to the pater familias and to the pater

patrias' (Schuurman 1992: 37). Under Pinochet, therefore, the emphasis was on motherhood, patriotism and positive reinforcement of apolitical behaviour in women (Schuurman 1992: 83).

Women's Movements

Between 1973 and 1975 women's organisations were primarily occupied with human rights and directed help to families in need. During the twenty-five years after gaining the vote in 1949, according to Kirkwood (1986), gender consciousness shifted to the background. From 1978 onwards gender consciousness among women regained prominence (Schuurman 1992: 69) and many self-consciously feminist and womenfocused groups were formed. Many of these women's organisations were NGOs and not grassroots organisations (Schuurman 1992: 36).

The grassroots women's movements (which expressed mainly practical concerns) and feminist movements (expressing longer-term concerns) converged to a considerable degree. Taken together in what could be called a 'women's movement', the various groupings presented diverse demands, ranging from practical concerns such as crèches, improved social services, and clean water, to longer term demands such as equality, the socialisation of domestic tasks, and the right to choose. What the organisations shared was the desire to resist violence and the dictatorship: 'In the 1980s, feminist debates in Chile focused on the role of the women's movement in the overthrow of the military

junta and their (future) political participation. Political and personal aspects of feminism were combined in the cry for democracy' (Schuurman 1992: 66).

Once the political parties began to reconstruct their own spaces for action after 1983, they tried to control and co-opt the social organisations, including the women's groups. Women's groups resisted the potential loss of autonomy but at the same time saw the need for channels of expression and social representation (Valenzuela 1991: 172).

Feminist groups

In the early years of the dictatorship there was much public resistance to feminism, which was considered a threat to the family. Feminist events such as the celebrations of International Women's Day were broken up by the police and army. However, the United Nation's declaring 1975 International Women's Year, and 1975-85 as the Women's Decade, opened public debate about discrimination at governmental and non-governmental levels (Fisher 1993: 204). Returning exiles also played a role in spreading information about the feminist movement abroad.

Feminist groups typically carried out research, popular education, and survivalsupport activities in the *poblaciones*, and were also active in the protests against

Pinochet. All the groups struggled for democracy but the feminist groups conceived of
democracy as including equal rights for women. They argued that democracy had never
really existed for women in a society dominated by patriarchal and authoritarian

relations. Many combined an analysis of capitalism and the need for major socioeconomic transformation with an analysis of patriarchy and the need for women's
autonomy and self-determination in the political process. The first feminist demonstration
occurred in August 1983 when the sixty women of the Feminist Movement (consisting of
women who wanted to participate as feminists in the protests) staged a five-minute sit-in
on the steps of Santiago's national Library under a banner which read 'Democracy Now!
The Feminist Movement of Chile'. Slogans such as 'Democracy in the Nation and in the
Home' and 'Without Women there's no Democracy' began to appear on demonstrations
against military rule (Valenzuela 1991: 174).

There was little contact between the different women's organisations because many were concentrated on the daily problems of the members, lacked experience in communication and co-operation, could not afford transport costs, and because the NGOs which supported these organisations were sometimes in competition (Schuurman 1992: 107). However, even though the women's movement did not achieve unity, women's issues became a legitimate concern and each social and political institution had to articulate its position concerning women (Valenzuela 1991).

Most working-class women rejected the label 'feminist' which implied, to them, lesbianism, man-hating and bra-burning. Many working-class organisations suspected that feminism represented a middle-class attempt to divide the labour movement. In the beginning feminism played a limited role in influencing the development of the survival organisations, but with time many working-class women began to express an interest in feminism. Many joined feminist groups, attracted by the training and income-earning

possibilities they offered, and began to create specifically working-class feminist groups. However, 'It is important to point out that most women in the popular neighbourhoods are not formally organised at all' (Schuurman 1992: 111).

Women's Federations

A small number of grass-roots organisations (e.g. MOMUPO, CODEM and MUDECHI) formed to co-ordinate the activities of shantytown women's groups. Most were primarily concerned with survival issues, but began to incorporate a growing concern for the specific situation and rights of women. Later, self-education, self-development and consciousness-raising were added to their list of priorities. Some such organisations (e.g. MEMCH83) aimed to create a united women's front against the military government and to facilitate the flow of information among the various groups.

Human rights groups

Women who were victims of political repression formed organisations focusing on human rights issues, some of the best known of which were the Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared (see Chapter 3) and the Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners. After 1976, more formally structured women's organisations also concerned with human rights began to emerge (e.g. the Women's Committee of the Chilean Human Rights Commission).

Women were active in human rights organisations run by both men and women, and usually human rights organisations did not identify themselves according to gender. Most women within them stayed within the limits of the traditional definition of women's roles in politics by focusing on giving assistance to the victims of repression. Close links of human rights organisations to the proscribed political parties led them to give a high priority to partisan activities, with the result that they had less autonomy and were inhibited in their identity as women's organisations.

Women and protests

Women participated in the protests, together with men, and alone, especially during Women's Day. Some very large women-only protests were organised jointly by several women's organisations together, and brought together women from all social classes. For example, on December 29 1983, 8000 Chilean women came to the Caupolicán, the largest indoor theatre in Santiago, to participate in a demonstration called 'Liberty has a Woman's Name' which urged Chilean women to start fighting for 'life' as opposed to 'death' (represented by the military government) and to start building a democratic order 'today' and not 'tomorrow'. The meeting was an attempt to show the fragmented male political opposition that women could unite regardless of party affiliation (Bunster 1984: 66).

Women and the plebiscite

As trade unions and political parties began to reorganise, traditional political issues took pride of place in their discussions. Women's concerns were not entirely ignored, but they were not considered of primary importance. Consequently, women began setting up commissions where they could develop policies that responded to women's needs. Both official and opposition groups were determined to construct their own spaces, directed by and composed of women, outside the traditional tutelage of the parties and other organisations with historical male leadership. For example, women formed the Coalition of Women for Democracy, an entity separate from the Coalition of Parties for Democracy (Valenzuela 1991: 181). 'By the time elections took place in 1989, Chile's diverse women's movement had established itself as a social force and had managed to include some of its demands, ranging from equal civil and labour rights to programmes for poor women, in the manifesto of the main opposition coalition' (Fisher 1993: 197). The political groupings on both sides, at the time of the plebiscite, addressed women.

The plebiscite, whilst giving rise to intense activity by women's groups, also brought to light the internal divisions within the collection of women's groups.

^{&#}x27;The differences between women, hidden by the common struggle against military rule, came to the surface during the election campaigns and made the construction of a unified women's movement difficult. There were debates about how far women's organisations should co-operate with the government, state or political parties in their projects for women and risk manipulation and how far they should remain autonomous and risk powerlessness. The differences not only hindered co-operation between women's organisations but also caused internal tensions and divisions'. (Fisher 1993: 206)

Despite women's efforts, in the December 1989 elections only four women were chosen as representatives in the House of Commons, and two were made senators in the Senate. This meant that women made up about 5% of the total number of 158 members of parliament. The Concertación did not change the position of women in the parties; they had their own department but were under-represented at the top (if present at all) and could not introduce issues of structural transformation of gender relations into the agenda (Schuurman 1992: 90).

A Women's Ministry

One of the proposals in the national election programme of the Concertación was the formation of a National Office of Women's Affairs at a ministerial level, aimed at the abolition of discrimination against women. The office came into existence in May 1990 under the name of SERNAM. Its purpose is the mobilisation and co-ordination of a national network of women's organisations, the incorporation of women in the development process, the bringing of Chilean jurisdiction in line with the United Nations Convention concerning the abolition of all forms of discrimination against women, and the stimulation of gender research.

THE RETURN TO DEMOCRACY

The Government

When Aylwin became president in March 1990, the transition to democracy was far from complete. Important social institutions remained in the hands of Pinochet supporters, including the judiciary, education system, local councils and most significantly, the armed forces. Pinochet remains Commander in Chief of the armed forces, protected by a number of legal instruments set up to block any attempt to bring his men to trial, including an amnesty for all crimes committed between 1973-1978.

Consequently, the President has little authority over the armed forces and the police.

The Economy

None of the major opposition parties had proposed real alternatives to the International Monetary Fund's adjustment packages (Fisher 1993: 207), and the ability of councils and local governments to respond to grassroots demands had been constrained by central government's priority of debt repayment. Consequently, the economic situation was not optimal. Despite sustained economic growth since 1984, 44.4 per cent of Chileans lived in poverty at the end of 1990, compared with just 20 per cent in 1970, and the real purchasing power of the minimum wage, deflated by a consumer price index weighted for the consumption patterns of the poor, was still only 53.8 per cent of what it had been in September 1981 (Oxhorn 1994:64). Sustained economic growth and increased social expenditures did reduce the number of people living in poverty by one million between 1990 and 1994 but that still left roughly 30 per cent of the population four million people- below the poverty line at the end of 1993 (Oxhorn 1994:64).

Moreover, neither unemployment nor subemployment had decreased significantly between the presidential elections of 1990 and 1994 (Schild 1994: 60).

To improve the economic situation of the poorest segments of Chilean society

Aylwin's government doubled the minimum monthly wage in 1991 (although this did not
affect those in the informal sector). He also increased the budget for social welfare
programmes, and local and national policies for dealing with poverty, but these changes
were not a significant break with the economic policies of the military regime.

The Survival Organisations

The survival organisations continued to grow in first years of democracy, doubling every two years, and spread to all regions of Chile (Fisher 1993: 41). The Aylwin government did recognise the important role that popular organisations could play in the future and established a special high-level office, the 'Division of Social Organisations', to serve as the interface between the government and various community organisations, and administer programs intended to facilitate the emergence of popular organisations. However, by the mid Nineties, many organisations had shut down (See Chapter 6).

Some foreign agencies began to channel their funds through government institutions and consequently grass-roots organisations and NGOs had less direct access

to international support. The women in them had to learn to deal with bureaucracy and formality.

The Government and Human Rights

The government did pay some attention to human rights violations by publishing, in 1991, a report known as the 'Report of the Committee of Truth and Reconciliation' or 'Rettig Report', which chronicles the murders of 2279 people by the military in the aftermath of the Coup. However, Aylwin's government could do little to atone for the human rights abuses as many of those responsible for them are protected by the amnesty law. The Rettig report was not translated into judicial action against army personnel.

It is in this context of lessened political repression and generally greater economic stability, that the arpillera groups operate today.

CHAPTER 3: THE GROUPS AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS

This chapter describes the institutions which created and organised the arpillera groups, the way the groups were organised, and the women's motivations for joining them. The groups, the arpilleras, and the changes which occurred in the women (the development of a political and gender consciousness, see Chapters 6 and 7), were very strongly marked by the character of the institutions which trained them, supported them, and exported their arpilleras: the Comité, Vicaría, Agrupación and Prisma de los Andes.

The first part of the chapter deals with the Comité and Vicaría, and the arpillera groups which worked under them. The second part describes the Agrupación and its arpillera group and song group ('Conjunto'). The third part examines the importance of solidarity for the Vicaría and Agrupación. The fourth part describes Prisma de los Andes and the two groups studied within it. The fifth examines the Macul embroidery group. The sixth part examines the function of the arpillera groups for the women.

I studied five groups of women: one attached to the Vicaría (the 'Santa Adriana' group), two attached to Prisma de los Andes (the 'Las Místicas' and 'Peñiwén' groups), one attached to the Agrupación, and finally the independent 'Lomas de Macul' embroidery group.

Groups	Sta. Adriana	Conjunto	Las Místicas	Peñiwén	Lomas de
					Macul
Institutional	Vicaría	Comité,	Prisma de	Prisma de	None
affiliation		Vicaría, and	los Andes	los Andes	,
		Agrupación			
History	Created by	Created by	Created as	Created as	Splinter
	local priest	relatives of	one of	one of	group from
	from	disappeared	Prisma's	Prisma's	larger
	children's	seeking help	cohorts	cohorts	embroidery
	soup kitchen	in Vicaría			group
Artistic	Political	Protest	Religious	Landscape	Embroidered
product	arpilleras in	songs	arpilleras	arpilleras	tapestries,
	1970's and				naive and
	1980's,				cheerful in
	naive				style
	arpilleras in		.5		
	1990's				

THE COMITÉ DE COOPERACIÓN POR LA PAZ

The institution which created and organised the largest number of arpillera groups in Chile, including the Santa Adriana and Agrupación arpillera groups, was the Comité de Cooperación por la Paz, which later became the Vicaría de la Solidaridad. Both were the best known human rights organisations in Chile; they helped victims of political repression and the economic crisis, as well as victims of human rights abuses. Whilst clandestine political parties, feminist groups and numerous other organisations carried out resistance activities, the Comité and Vicaría were internationally and locally recognised as the resistance and aid institutions *par excellence*. The first arpillera groups (consisting of the mothers and wives of the disappeared, political prisoners, and shantytown women whose husbands were unemployed) were created and organised by the Comité in conjunction with local priests in the shantytowns.

The Comité was an ecumenical church organisation created on 6th October 1973 by the Cardinal Archbishop of Santiago, Raúl Silva Henríquez, and the representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran, Jesuit, Jewish, Orthodox, Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal churches, as well as the World Council of Churches¹. The Archbishopal Decree which gave the Comité legal existence stated it was to be: 'A special commission to help Chileans who, as a consequence of the recent political events, find themselves in a situation of grave economic or personal need. This commission will give legal, economic, technical and spiritual aid'. Large amounts of foreign aid flowed into the Comité (and later the Vicaría).

The Catholic Church was deeply divided over the extent to which it should concern itself with such issues. It rationalised its stance as the continuation of a Church tradition of helping, promoting and educating the needy, and as an attempt to promote fours items which Pope John XXIII presented as the pillars of Peace: truth, justice, fraternity and freedom. The Comité's focus on helping the suffering stems in part from Liberation Theology, an ideological current which swept through the Catholic Church in Latin America in the Seventies: 'The theology of liberation imagines a kingdom of God on earth, one based on justice and equality, a world without hunger, sickness, or child mortality' (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 529). Liberation theology called for the Church to defend the poor and oppressed (Lehmann 1990: 123). In concrete terms it involved consciousness-raising, organisation and support of the poor (Schuurman 1992: 65).

Because of the Comité's stance, a gulf developed between the military government and the Catholic Church. The government criticised the Comité for defining the government as the enemy, in its defence of human rights. The Comité was permanently watched by the authorities and, according to government reports, was a 'centre of subversion'. In a letter to the Cardinal, dated 11th November 1975, Pinochet stated:

[&]quot;... it is a means whereby Marxist-Leninists justify creating problems which disturb the peace of citizens and the necessary quietude, the maintenance of which is my main duty as governor. Therefore, a positive step towards preventing more serious ills would be the dissolution of the Comité'.

¹ Information about the institutions comes mostly from the Vicaría publication (1991): <u>Vicaría de la Solidaridad</u>. <u>Historia de su Trabajo Social</u>.

At the end of 1975 the Cardinal was called to Pinochet's office and told to dissolve it or Pinochet would dissolve it himself. In December 1975 the Comité closed (only to open again a few days later as the Vicaría).

The personnel which made up the Comité included social workers, monks, nuns, doctors, midwives, nurses and lawyers. Many had been trained in Schools of Social Work or had worked in the National Health Service under Allende and had been given the sack because they were seen as left wing activists. The Comité's personnel were mostly left wing. They were also very idealistic and, according to the Vicaría literature (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991) possessed 'A vital project- of work, social or political- which was frustrated by the Coup d'Etat. A good measure of mysticism and faith that beyond pain, it was possible to generate new life, and a total conviction that it was necessary to do something, to respond to the emergency and not sit doing nothing'. Vicaría members aimed to work in a participatory fashion, 'making the people they worked with protagonists' (this was a frequent phrase in Vicaría documents). The Vicaría literature emphasises total commitment, the risking of lives² and the desire to help those in need. Not all the staff were religious or even Christian (some were accepted because of the technical support they could provide).

As well as wanting to help those in need, Comité employees also wanted to denounce (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991): 'Although not in a structured form, in the solidarity work of the Comité por la Paz there was always the idea of denouncing what

was happening. Even in very silent tasks like health care'. A Vicaría doctor stated: 'As well as caring, we had to denounce, we felt responsible for telling the world outside about the violations which were being committed in this country' (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 21).

Work with income-generating groups such as the arpillera groups, was only one of the Comité's many activities. The Comité also helped the relatives of people who had been executed, detained³, or disappeared; and the newly unemployed⁴. Comité employees went to Councils of War, distributed food to the poor (together with the NGO Caritas), created soup kitchens in the shantytown parishes⁵, provided health care in clinics⁶ and prisons, formed unemployment groups⁷, lent legal assistance to those in need, helped people leave the country, presented amparo proceedings, and sought information about the disappeared or those who were being badly tortured. The social workers of the Comité attended fifty-six people a day on average.

THE VICARÍA DE LA SOLIDARIDAD

² Some meetings were broken up by the police and several Vicaría staff were imprisoned. Vicaría members risked arrest at all times

³ 8718 detention cases were reported to the Comité during its existence (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 30)

⁴ 6189 people were reported as having lost their jobs during the Comité years (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 30).

⁵ Over 250 soup kitchens fed approximately 25000 children in the zones (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991).

⁶ The Comité's Health Programme worked with 70000 cases during the Comité years (Vicaría de la Solidaridad: 1991).

In January 1976 the Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez set up the Vicaría de la Solidaridad to replace the Comité. The Vicaría was part of the Archbishopric of Santiago, a position which gave it considerably more power and protection than the Comité. Like the Comité, its goal was to help (legally, psychologically and economically) the different sorts of victims of human rights violations and economic crisis. It was different from the Comité in the way it was structured; it was more bureaucratic, its activities were more professionalised (for example, there were 'solidarity teams' in the shantytowns) and there were more staff (and only staff who were against violent action could work in the Vicaría). In concrete terms, the Vicaría's main functions were: providing resources, setting up and helping organisations, training, and encouraging thinking about its work. As in many organisations, there was disagreement about these functions and the emphasis to be placed on evangelising, politically indoctrinating, and merely helping (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991).

The Vicaría emphasised helping people help themselves (partly because it was afraid of being accused of paternalism). As a Vicaría employee stated: 'The work had to start as assistance, because of the urgency, but it was carried out on the basis of a self-help principle, that is: "help yourself and I will help you", because we helped people to organise and become the makers of their own destiny. Everything started with very simple tasks which favoured working-class organisation, a social fabric which allowed the people to become the subjects of their own destiny (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 79).

⁷ The Comité formed 60 unemployment groups which each had between 20 and 300 members (Vicaría de

The Vicaría changed direction somewhat in the early Eighties. In 1983 the Vatican decided to replace Cardinal Henríquez with the conservative Cardinal Fresno, who asked that the solidarity teams in the shantytowns and parishes make their evangelising message more explicit. As a Vicaría employee described:

'They asked that we try to get the children at the soup kitchens to go to catechism. We did not agree with this. They never asked us to do this directly, in a document or meeting. It was more like ambiguous messages... In any case, our work did have an important theological foundation, we made sure it did' (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 101).

As a result of such pressures many of the members of solidarity teams founded freestanding women's NGOs with the support of donors (often foreign aid agencies).

The Vicaría closed down in 1991 and some of its activities were transferred to other Church offices. The section of the Vicaría which had dealt with arpilleras became independent and its name changed to 'Fundación Solidaridad'. By 1996 it had approximately seven staff members, involved in management, packaging, carrying out quality control, and teaching courses.

The Area Department

The Vicaría tried to decentralise its work by creating an Area Department which ran different programmes from within the six pastoral areas of Santiago. These local

la Solidaridad 1991)

offices were called 'Vicarías zonales' and were managed by 'solidarity teams' which set up, trained and worked principally with unemployment groups, soup kitchens, health groups, and survival or income-generating groups⁸. The area offices were also sources of information for the central Vicaría office. The Areas Department grew rapidly, as did the number of solidarity organisations and their members within each area. Assistance, education and indoctrination were part of the department's aims: 'The structure of the work, in any case, was not just administrative. Behind it there was a social and educational goal, also theological and doctrinal', as a Vicaría employee described (1991: 62).

In most areas the Vicaría teams carried out overtly anti-government activities. In the Southern area, for example, the Vicaría staff gave information about what to do with people who were arrested and how to assist the wounded. They also, in some cases, helped with land seizures. Some Vicaría teams, however, were reluctant to engage in political activities, and afraid that the shantytown inhabitants were being used by political parties.

A social worker, lawyer, priest or nun, and medical professional typically made up the solidarity team. All solidarity teams went from parish to parish persuading the priests that there was poverty, that soup kitchens were needed, that human rights were

⁸ Other activities included providing food, working with human rights issues and the relatives of the disappeared, organising toy collections before Christmas, running children's summer camps and outings, and running housing committees (to denounce problems related to housing and the debts to electricity and water companies). In some areas, the activities of the Vicaría were jointly organised with other church institutions or NGOs.

being violated, and that they had to co-operate. Although in some cases the local churches became very involved in the Vicaría's work, their own regular activities continued.

Sometimes local priests called on the Vicaría to set up arpillera workshops, (as occurred in the case of the Sta. Adriana group), but in some areas the relationship between the Vicaría team and the local parish was tense.

The arpillera groups within the Vicaría structure

The arpillera groups were one of several income-generating groups run by the area offices. In many cases, the office provided a meeting place for the different groups and also a place where courses were held. In the late Eighties, there were 1500 arpilleristas working with the Vicaría (Silva de Muller, no date: 20). Whilst the area offices provided the arpillera groups with a meeting place and training, the central Vicaría office's 'Department of Income-generating Workshops' (nicknamed *Talleres* or 'Workshops') bought the arpilleras from the women, and sold them abroad and in Chile¹⁰. This department was both profit-oriented and solidarity-oriented: its aim was to earn enough money to help the suppliers of goods. When 'Talleres' became the 'Fundación Solidaridad' when the Vicaría closed down in 1991, it continued to perform the same functions.

⁹ Local church buildings were also a common meeting place, as were, in the post-dictatorship years, members' homes.

¹⁰ It also bought and sold other types of handicraft (mainly woollen, copper and wooden items), and in some cases organised training for the various artisans it worked with.

The average arpillerista today and in the later years of the dictatorship had very little contact with Talleres or other central Vicaría offices. Only the leaders of the workshops interacted with Talleres, when they received orders for arpilleras or when it was time to hand in the arpilleras for quality control. Usually it was not the leader of each workshop who went, but the leader of a group of workshops, organised geographically into *coordinadoras*. In the Seventies and Eighties, twelve arpillera groups made up a *coordinadora*; by the Nineties only six. There was and continues to be one *coordinadora* per *sector* (geographical area). In 1995, the workshop leaders who made up the *coordinadora* met only every few months, on the occasion of an order for arpilleras from the Vicaría, or so as to organise the Christmas market stall (see Chapter 4).

The leader of the *coordinadora* is always a member of an arpillera group herself. Mari, the leader of the Southern *coordinadora* of which the Sta. Adriana group is a member, for example, belongs to an arpillera group in a *población* next to Sta. Adriana and has six groups under her leadership. She was chosen by the women, and if they become dissatisfied with her (as happened with the Peñalolén group) they might try to demote her; there are no regular elections. It is the leader of the *coordinadora* who receives orders for work from the Vicaría and passes on the orders to the different workshops. It is to her that the leaders of each workshop give their groups' completed work. She carries out quality control in her house, accepting some arpilleras and turning away others. When the women return to her with the 'corrected' arpilleras she takes them to the Fundación (or Talleres in the past) for a second round of quality control. Here,

Winnie or one of her helpers examines them and accepts most, but rejects a number. The coordinadora leader returns home and telephones the leaders of the groups to tell them to come and pick up the money for the arpilleras, and any rejected arpilleras. It is also her responsibility (together with the leaders of each workshop) to organise and staff the stall at the Christmas FESOL fair. She is not paid for her work.

Problems with the System of Organisation

The coordinadora system was not without its problems, as the case of the Sta. Adriana group illustrates. The arpilleristas regarded Mari (the coordinadora leader) with a mixture of resentment and suspicion, thinking that she was regularly receiving orders from the Fundación but only giving them to her own group so that it could earn most money. During my short period of participant observation with the Villa Sur (led by Mari) I did notice that the group had more work than the Sta. Adriana group and received orders about which the Sta. Adriana group never heard. The Sta. Adriana arpilleristas also resented the fact that Mari did not keep them informed of what was happening on the orders front. Ada complained to the other women in the group that unless the leaders of each group phoned Mari to ask whether there was any work, they might never get any to do. The arpilleristas also resented the way the leader of the coordinadora turned away arpilleras; her reasons often seemed arbitrary and her manner was humiliating. Finally, the Sta. Adriana arpilleristas would have liked Mari to share with them the knowledge she acquired on a management course she took (but Mari never did).

Relations between the arpilleristas and the Fundación employees were also strained. Ada once went to hand in arpilleras and still remembers vividly the humiliation she felt at the way a Fundación employee treated her and criticised the arpilleras. The arpilleristas resented the fact that the Vicaría was ordering far less work than in the past, and did not understand why. They also suspected the Fundación of selling at a far higher price than it was paying them, and keeping the difference. The Vicaría's workings were somewhat nebulous to the women; they did not know who (other than Winnie) worked there, or even that Talleres had changed its name to 'Fundación Solidaridad' (they still called it 'la Vicaría' 12).

To an outsider the Vicaría might appear like an irregular client, but to the arpilleristas it was more like a boss or employer. The client, in their view was the person or institution which bought the arpilleras from the Vicaría. Because the Vicaría had been a steady source of orders in the past and had set up the groups in the first place, the arpilleristas had come to rely on it for arpillera selling. As a result, they did not know how to begin to look for other buyers when it failed them. They even felt afraid that the Vicaría would be displeased if it found out that they were selling elsewhere, and might stop giving them work.

¹¹ I was not able to verify whether the Fundación was keeping the difference to cover costs or for other purposes. It is certainly the case, however, that the arpilleristas did not have a good understanding of the costs incurred by any commercial enterprise.

¹² For this reason, I will also refer to Talleres and the Fundación as the 'Vicaría'.

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Finally, the Vicaría did not give the women any social security. There was no health insurance or compensation for loss of work, and the women did not receive a written contract. The payment the arpilleristas received was very low indeed: 4500 pesos (US\$ 10.50) for a medium sized arpillera and 1700 pesos (US\$ 5) for a small one. The small arpilleras took approximately four hours to complete and a middle-sized one took approximately three times as long. Also, the Vicaría had never registered the workshops legally or suggested to them how this might be done. This could potentially have made it difficult for the arpilleristas to find other clients as some shops insisted on buying only from legally registered workshops.

The arpillera groups: internal organisation

Each group has between three and ten women who usually meet once a week or less (depending on how much work there is), for an afternoon, in a church building or member's home. The groups function as fairly autonomous units; the women buy the materials for arpillera-making themselves and organise the distribution of the work in a democratic way amongst themselves. Each arpillera group has one democratically elected leader, although elections are not held at regular intervals.

The Sta. Adriana Group

The Sta. Adriana group (or 'Taller Laboral') is a member of the Southern coordinadora. It meets in the población of Sta. Adriana, approximately thirty minutes' underground ride from downtown Santiago. The arpillera workshop began in 1976, emerging out of a soup kitchen when the local priest decided that the women were too dependent on the kitchen for food and would benefit from earning their own income. He made joining the workshop a condition for use of the soup kitchen, but before long put an end to the soup kitchen on the grounds that several beneficiaries never helped run it and the same mothers were volunteering all the time.

The group consisted of four members when I joined and three by the time I left. The ages of the women ranged from 37 to 58. All the members except for the youngest have children and grandchildren. None work for a regular income outside the home, but both Juana and Sara earn money in free-lance jobs; Sara makes arpillera 'monos' (arpillera figures) occasionally and Juana sells cardboard boxes which she collects, and 'waipe' (see Introduction). All the members live in the población of Sta. Adriana, except for Ada who lives in another población, La Bandera, a fifteen-minute bus-ride away. The group meets once a week, on Thursdays from 5 to 7 or 8 p.m., in Juanita's (one of the members) living-room. Towards the beginning of my stay the women sat on the sofa and chairs and talked and made 'waipe', but towards the end they sat at the living room table making arpilleras. The atmosphere was cosy, familial, jokey and very affectionate. The women behaved like old friends, even if the did not share some personal facts with each other. They talked mostly about their families (including problems), people they knew, the arpilleras, the Christmas fair, television news items, and neighbours.

Ada has been the leader of the group for many years. Her responsibilities are varied. She telephones Mari to ask whether there is work and passes on the orders to the other women, distributes the work amongst the group in a democratic fashion (the women discuss together how many arpilleras they wish to make), and goes to Mari's house to hand in finished arpilleras. If, after the quality control, Mari or the Vicaría demand corrections, Ada tells the ladies what changes are required, consoles or encourages them if they are upset (as they usually are), and returns to Mari's with the work once it is corrected. She also organises the group's arpillera-making for the FESOL (the annual artisans' fair in December), sells at the stall, and pays the women when money comes in from clients. Her relationship to the other women in the group is more like that which exists between friends than that between a boss and his or her employees. The women disagree openly with her and do not work when they do not want to. There is no conflict over leadership because there are no other claims to it; the other members appear not to want to lead.

Their making of arpilleras is both an individual and a collective process. The women buy their 'raw materials' and tools (cloth, wool and needles, scissors and a tiny metal device to help with threading needles) individually, even though buying in bulk would lower the cost. The cloth comes from a shop a few blocks away, and the needles, threader and thread from the weekly neighbourhood market. They make their own arpilleras (rather than work in production-line fashion, for example). However, the work is collective in a number of ways. If a member does not have the tool or piece of cloth she

needs, the others give it to her. They share needles, scissors and the threader amongst each other as they work. The women are very sensitive to the character of their tools and materials, talking, for example, of the smoothness of one needle relative to another, or admiring the colour or texture of certain scraps of cloth. They also joke about the hazards that come with using the tools. When, for example, Sara cried out as she pricked herself with her needle, the others joked that she had a hole in her finger. Finally, work is collective in that the women often ask each other about a certain arpillera convention (e.g. 'How many children go in the $ronda^{13}$?') and suggest colours to match if asked.

Recruitment to the arpillera groups

If a woman wishes to join an arpillera group, she must first meet the group, and then await the group's response regarding the possibility of her joining. Estrella, for example, was accepted within the Sta. Adriana group because the group decided that she did have a real need to join a group. Criteria are usually humane: the need for an income or to escape solitude, are frequently used. Access to a group is often made easier because a potential member knows someone in the group, who introduces her. At the height of the economic crises of the Pinochet years, the Vicaría set rules about who could join a group. One rule, for example, was that there could not be two direct family members within the same group.

¹³ A ronda is a group of children holding hands in a circle.

Arpillera group members occasionally recruit people to help them make arpilleras. Juana's daughter appeared to make most of Juana's arpilleras, for example. In the past, when unemployment was rife, all the family helped make arpilleras on occasion:

'We had an arpillerista whose whole family were arpilleristas, the husband, the sons, the daughters, they all learnt to make arpilleras. I'll say that, of all the arpilleristas I know, she is the only one, I think, who has masses of money; because she knew how to make the most of it. She made all her family work, because they were all unemployed and no-one was working, so they all worked in the arpillera; because in those days we had good arpillera sales, and you sold as many as you could make'. (Peñalolén group).

Some husbands help with arpillera-making today (even though it is looked down upon for a man to sew).

The Comité and Vicaría, therefore, were institutions within which many shantytown arpillera groups worked. These two institutions were also central to the arpillera groups of the relatives of the disappeared.

THE AGRUPACION DE FAMILIARES DE DETENIDOS-DESAPARECIDOS

The Agrupación possessed its own arpillera groups which functioned both within the central Vicaría office and in the various Vicaría area offices. These groups were strongly marked by both the Vicaría and the Agrupación.

The Agrupación was formed in 1974. Initially it operated within the Comité; later within the Vicaría's central and local offices. The members of the Agrupación first came together because they kept meeting each other in the various government offices, morgues, and prisons at which they were searching for their disappeared. All came to the Comité (and later the Vicaría), which gave them legal and psychological aid, emotional support, and advice about the bureaucratic processes they had to go through to gain information about their loved ones. The Vicaría also helped them by publishing some of their denunciatory documents, such as the 'Rotafoglio', an illustrated book telling the story of the Agrupación.

The Agrupación, together with the Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners, was the first institution to organise public activities denouncing and opposing the regime. In its early protest activities in the late Seventies the women denounced the regime's treatment of the family, suggesting that their position as mothers and upholders of the family was threatened by the government's policies. In doing so they were evoking the powerful image of motherhood which the regime claimed to defend (Agosin 1988). In later years the Agrupación's protests became broader in scope, focusing on the violation of human rights and the return to democracy. Although the Agrupación had mostly women members (approximately 90 per cent of its members were women) it was not a women's organisation and its members were not interested in promoting women's rights.

By the early Eighties the Agrupación emphasised disappearance as a problem for society as a whole. The Rotafoglio states: 'They are missed not only in their homes, by

their children, by their wife, by their mother... they are also missed in their organisations and by the people'. It emphasises the moral duty of society as a whole to find truth; a page showing workers holding hands states: 'Struggling together we will find the truth'. The Agrupación at this time attacks the violation of human rights as a whole (not just the problem of disappearance). Another page of the Rotafoglio says: 'Chile needs to recover its conscience. It is urgent to solve the problem of the detained and disappeared and prevent that in this country human rights continue to be violated. Our struggle for Truth is part of the people's path to liberty'. Other violations the Agrupación denounced at the time, both in the Rotafoglio and in its arpilleras, include exile, poverty, solitude, fear, and repression.

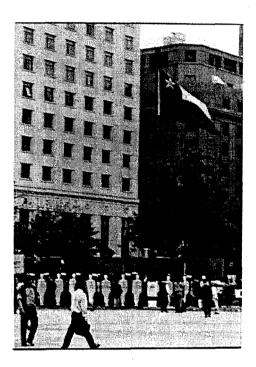
As well as denouncing, the Agrupación made demands of the government. Its principle demand was *Verdad y Justicia* or 'Truth and Justice' (truth about the disappeared and justice for those who violated human rights): 'The problem of the detained-disappeared affects not only those who suffer but all the national community, as it is an obstacle to values as significant as Truth and Justice' (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1983: 7). It also demanded that the nation did not forget, particularly through protests.

By 1996 the Agrupación was one of the most vocal groups in the defence of human rights in Chile. Its basic goals had not changed:

^{&#}x27;We put up [a struggle] for two concrete reasons: to find them, (first to find them alive), and for justice. Today our aims have not changed in that we are still demanding 'Where are they?' and that justice be dealt, independent of the fact that we have accepted that they have all been killed... but we want to find their remains... Later on the Agrupación added other objectives... which were "Never Again", and this is never going to happen again ... that never again a state, anywhere in the

world, can seize the right to eliminate those who oppose it, be it for political, religious, race or other reasons. Because the state, has as its main purpose to defend and respect the rights of all the citizens of this country... the state must answer for it... and it must sanction those who are responsible' (Interview with Sola Sierra, President of the Agrupación).

The Agrupación in 1996 was still demanding, in all its protests, 'Dónde Están?' ('Where are they?') and 'Truth and Justice'.



A protest of the Agrupación and other human rights groups. The protesters carry life-size silhouettes of victims of the dictatorship



A close-up of the silhouettes: 'I am a victim of the dictatorship. They tortured me. They murdered me. They disappeared me. Have you forgotten me?'



The protest: behind the lines. A 'Dónde Están?' picket is held up on the far left

The Agrupación has locally managed branches throughout Chile. It also has contact with other Latin American offices of the same kind, all of which are members of the Latin American Federation of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared. At its head is a president, Sola Sierra, and six or seven committee members, who organise the demonstrations and other activities of the Agrupación (over the years the Agrupación became increasingly militant). Members have a say in the running of events, via a meeting every Tuesday evening. The Agrupación is a well-known institution in Chile and news of its activities appears fairly frequently in the left wing and centre newspapers and on television; Sola Sierra is a well-known public figure.

The Agrupación offices are open to members all day. People drop by at irregular times, congregating in the main office, a large room with several tables and chairs and an adjoining kitchen, toilets and medical room. They usually chat together quietly or read

the compilation of newspaper articles about human rights which the Agrupación receives.

There are rarely more than ten members in the office at any one time, except for on

Tuesday evenings.

Not every relative of a disappeared person participates in the Agrupación and many Agrupación members do not participate in the events it organises or the weekly meetings, only dropping by occasionally to chat with old friends. The elderly members sometimes limit themselves to the meetings, feeling they do not have enough energy to participate in the various protests.

Political party affiliation is fairly significant in the management of the Agrupación. Because of political disagreements, the Agrupación split in two a number of years ago with the supporters of the MIR (a very militant left-wing group) forming their own separate group. The remaining Agrupación was dominated by the Communist party (too much so for the liking of some members) because most of its 'managers' belong to this party.

The Agrupación receives some of its funding from foreign agencies, but has very few resources. Most of the women of the Agrupación receive a *reparación* (monthly pension) from the government to compensate for the loss of the relative.

The Phenomenon of Disappearance

The disappeared are a heterogeneous group of men, women and children from all over Chile. Many were political activists or party leaders of the Left; working-class members of trade unions, and students. They were usually arrested by the police, soldiers, members of the airforce, and especially DINA agents, and taken to secret prisons. These include the National Stadium, a building in Central Santiago referred to as Londres 38, another building in central Santiago referred to as José Domingo Cañas, Villa Grimaldi and Cuatro Alamos (also in Santiago). They were interrogated and tortured.

The Search

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The relatives of the disappeared started to look for their relatives in prisons, clinics, hospitals, and the morgue. They also sought information at the courts of justice, the Comité (later the Vicaría), the Ministry of Defence and other government offices. In the queues at these places, they exchanged information with other relatives who were also searching. The search for the disappeared relative became a full-time occupation for the relatives and one of the main concerns of the Agrupación. It became the theme of many arpilleras and songs, and the words 'Dónde Están?' (Where are they?) appear on the Agrupación's logo, banners, pickets, and other demonstration equipment.

The relatives and the Comité and Vicaría presented various documents to the Courts of Justice, including testimonies, legal declarations and amparo proceedings, but

all were unsuccessful. The authorities often stated that the disappeared were not imprisoned, that there was no information, that they never existed, had never been arrested, or that they were abroad. The international NGO community (Amnesty International and the World Council of Churches) put pressure on Chile but to no avail.

Denunciation

The Agrupación produced several denunciatory documents. As well as the arpilleras, there were books, written (and oral) testimonies, banners, pickets, and badges showing a hand holding up a picket which says 'Dónde Están?'. There are also monthly publications of the Agrupación's activities. The Agrupación views itself as part of a 'long chain of denunciation' with other Latin American countries. At one of the meetings of the Latin American Federation of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared, for example, it demanded that forced disappearance be declared a crime against humanity¹⁴.

Protests

The Agrupación devised numerous protest activities including hunger strikes, street demonstrations, sit-ins in front of the presidential palace of La Moneda, and chainings to the gates of the Congress building.

¹⁴ According to the Federation there have been 90000 disappeared in the Latin American continent.



A hunger strike depicted in an arpillera

Agrupación members also stuck lists of the disappeared on public walls, hung banners on public fences, planted pickets in parks¹⁵, and distributing sheets of paper with the words 'I demand the truth', and 'Where is my husband?'. At all the demonstrations Agrupación members wore photos of their disappeared and carried banners and pickets saying 'Dónde Están?'. They were often joined in their protests by religious groups, *pro-retorno* groups (in favour of the return of exiles), the Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners, workers, students, other human rights organisations, professionals, trade unions, artists, intellectuals, unemployment groups and committees of *pobladores*. The protests took place in all parts of Santiago, including the shantytowns. In the latter case, the local

¹⁵ The pickets contained photos of the disappeared and the words 'Dónde Están?'.

Vicaría office sometimes helped¹⁶. The Agrupación's protests were partly to spread information blocked by censorship. The Rotafoglio states: 'With the protest actions, the Agrupación wins a space for the problem. But it is still not enough.'

Many of the human rights demonstrations organised in Santiago in 1995 and 1996 were organised by the Agrupación together with other human rights organisations. These demonstrations included demonstrations in the Plaza de la Moneda, vigils, and remembrance days at cemeteries or sites where disappeared people had been found.

Protest acts took place once or twice a month on average.

The arpillera groups of the Agrupación

There were Agrupación arpillera workshops in all the Vicaría's area offices except for the central office. The first one was started in 1974 in the Eastern Vicaría office. The relationship of the Agrupación arpillera groups to the Vicaría was broadly similar to that of the shantytown women, with some differences. Like the shantytown groups, the Agrupación arpilleristas sold to the Vicaría. There was no *coordinadora* as intermediary; instead a member of the groups took the arpilleras to the Vicaría directly. The Vicaría carried out quality control in the same way as with the other groups. However, it was not as insistent with the Agrupación as with other groups, that it abide

¹⁶ Sometimes the Vicaría staff helped organise or finance the activities of the relatives of the disappeared. For example, when the relatives organised the folklore evenings, the Vicaría provided the stage, lights, and amplifiers.

rigidly to the new conventions; the arpilleristas of the Agrupación had slightly more leeway and their work was highly valued (see Chapter 5). Several of the Agrupación arpilleristas were invited by the Vicaría to teach arpillera-making to shantytown groups throughout Santiago¹⁷.

The workshops closed down at the end of the dictatorship, partly as a result of the Vicaría's demands, which the group members judged to be excessive, and partly because the Vicaría refused to buy their work because most of the group members had begun to receive the government pension as compensation for what they had suffered. Only two women from the Agrupación continue to make arpilleras today, both because they need the income and because they want to denounce the fact that there were disappearances. The other ex-members pursue a wide range of other activities, from full-time employment to the occasional making of crocheted items for sale.

The 'Conjunto' or Song Group

The Song Group or 'Conjunto Folclórico' was formed in 1976 by members of the Eastern Area arpillera group. Its function was to sing songs denouncing the disappearances which occurred:

Jacqueline

How did the idea arise?

¹⁷ One woman was invited to teach in Washington D.C. as part of a human rights project run by the Institute of Policy Studies.

Toya (Group member) Because of this thing- what else can we do to denounce the problem.

Although there were twenty-five women to begin with, by 1995 there were only eight.

The average age of the group was sixty; the youngest member was forty and the eldest in her mid seventies. Most were widowed, or separated, and most had children and grandchildren. By the time I left, only two were working for an income outside the home.

The others survived on the government pension and with their children's help. They lived in different *poblaciones* in Santiago.

Although originally all the members of the Conjunto attended all the functions of the Agrupación and some helped in the management, now only some of them do.

Involvement with the Conjunto does not necessarily imply active involvement with the Agrupación.

The group met every Saturday in the Agrupación, between 10.30 and 1 p.m., until January 1996, when it began to meet every other Saturday because Toya (the leader) began to work full time. At the meetings the women sing as Toya accompanies them on the guitar and corrects them as does the leader of a choir, with great earnestness. At the beginning of each meeting Toya sets the agenda (asking for suggestions). This is also the time she or another member announces that the Conjunto has been invited to perform. A discussion about the logistics of getting there, and the character of the event, follows. Violeta, the 'secretary' of the group, notes down in her exercise book who is present. The group then sets to work singing.



Toya has instructed the women to clap as she plays



The women sing



Toya plays, seriously, as Ladi sings

Half way through the rehearsal the women take a break for tea. At this time and before and after the singing they joke and talk. Topics include: their families, neighbourhood occurrences, acquaintances, events in their lives that week, health, recent political events, acts they are to perform or have performed, and, less frequently, the Agrupación's activities. Occasionally they might mention their problems (however, two women never do). During these moments they are like a group of friends, but the character of the rehearsal as a whole is more that of a work session. At the end of the session Anita collects signatures so that those who have attended can be paid the cost of transport, by the Agrupación.

The Conjunto performs once every six weeks on average. It is usually invited to perform at events organised by left-wing groups or women's groups, and sometimes by the Agrupación itself. Performances in 1995-1996 included the twentieth anniversary of the Vicaría, a memorial day to the disappeared of Quillota (a town an hour from Santiago), a Women's Day celebrations in a park in Santiago, and a memorial celebration for Victor Jara (a left-wing musician and victim of the dictatorship) in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Santiago (La Pincoya).¹⁸



The Song Group performs in Quillota

¹⁸ In the early Nineties the Song Group toured Chile and Canada.

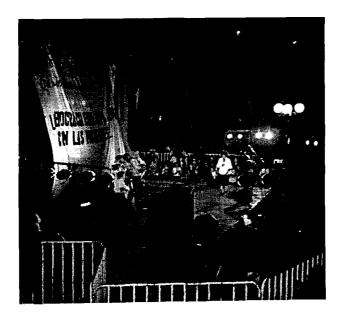


The audience's sad expressions mirror Toya's



Two members of the Song Group watch as a relative of a disappeared person carries out a symbolic burial in Quillota

On such occasions (referred to by the women as *actos* or 'acts') the group usually sings four to six songs. The songs are mostly Chilean folk songs, adapted and re-written for the cause. They are mostly about the problem of disappearance, but some are about the working class in general. At nearly every performance, the Conjunto sing and dance *La Cueca Sola* ('The Cueca Alone') for which it has become famous. The *cueca* is Chile's national dance in which a man and a woman act out a flirtation in a very coquettish way. Every Chilean learns the cueca in primary school. The Song Group's version of the cueca (*La Cueca Sola*) involves a woman dancing alone to emphasise the loss of her loved one. This familiar dance, transformed, has a powerful effect on Chileans. For the performances the women wear a black skirt and white blouse and carry a photograph of their disappeared relative on their breast.



The Song Group performs the Cueca Sola at a Woman's Day celebration in Santiago



The Cueca Sola- an Agrupación arpillerista's version



The cueca as it is normally danced



Detail of the cueca, a coquettish couple dance

Although they are often in the public eye (even though their performances are often not covered by the right wing newspapers of the dominant class), they claim that they do not want to be in the limelight but wish only for their disappeared relatives to be remembered. For this reason, according to Violeta, they introduce themselves at the beginning of each performance as 'daughter of' or 'wife of' rather than giving their own names. Members of the Agrupación who do wish to 'figurar' or 'be in the limelight' are criticised by others. Violeta, for example, criticised Sola Sierra for enjoying her fame and pointed out that the public hardly knows her disappeared husband's name.

The atmosphere in the group is one of a rehearsal. Although the women are talkative and fond of each other, there is not the degree of fondness of the Santa Adriana group. Nearly all the interviewees talked about tensions and discord within the group; Anita, for example, complained that there was a lot of fighting. Most members do not like the others to know too much about them. When Violeta and Anita gave me the arpilleras they had made for the exhibition I organised, they did so in a discrete way, so that no other member of the group saw them in the act.

In some respects the Conjunto is a very important and valued part of the Agrupación. It usually represents the Agrupación when it performs and the Cueca Sola has come to symbolise the Agrupación. The Conjunto is dependent on the Agrupación for a place to practise and for some of its invitations to perform. However, paradoxically, both the arpillera group (in the past) and the Song Group behave as if they were semi-independent of the Agrupación. The relationship between the Conjunto and the Agrupación is tense at times. The members of the Conjunto often complain that they receive no thanks or praise from the Agrupación. The president of the Agrupación sometimes gives them orders (e.g. she did not want them to sing a particular song on one occasion) and they do not obey them. Some of the Conjunto members feel they have been treated unfairly on an personal level because of their political leanings. Violeta, for example, feels that she has not received what she deserved in terms of *reparación* money because of her political leanings which do not coincide with those of the Communist president of the Agrupación. A number of Conjunto members feel that the Agrupación is overly dominated by political parties. Doris, for example, whose son was a member of the

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MIR, complained that the act celebrating the twentieth anniversary' of the Agrupación

was a mistake because the Agrupación started over twenty years ago and the twenty-year

mark was merely the date of entry of Communists into the Agrupación. The members of

the Conjunto feel they have been marginalised in various ways from the Agrupación and

they often express resentment towards their parent organisation.

The Conjunto's position, therefore, is one of marginality within what is a

marginalised institution upholding marginalised ideas. Both the Conjunto and the

Agrupación are fighting against marginalisation within Chilean society. The women of

the Conjunto feel that their ideas and demands have been pushed aside. They also think

that they have not received the recognition and treatment they deserve from the

democratic governments. For example, members of the Conjunto mentioned in interviews

that President Aylwin had promised them a building for their headquarters, but none

materialised. Resentment is one of the moods which frequently comes across in

conversations with the members of both groups.

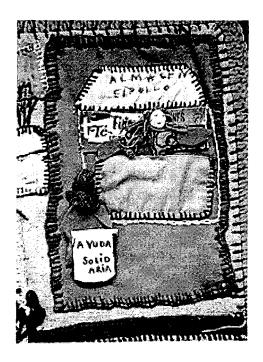
The Conjunto, Agrupación arpillera groups, and shantytown arpillera groups,

therefore, all functioned within larger institutions which impacted their activities and

organisation.

SOLIDARITY: THE LEITMOTIF OF THE ARPILLERA WORLD

The ethic of solidarity permeated the arpillera world, from the producers, through the Vicaría employees, to the buyers abroad. The ideal of all the arpillera groups connected with the Vicaría was to behave in a way which expressed solidarity, defined in broad terms as showing care and consideration for others. The ethic of solidarity which the buyers of arpilleras upheld, made the selling of the arpilleras and hence the existence of the workshops a possibility (See Chapter 4).



The giving of solidarity

This concern with solidarity stemmed in part from the Comité and Vicaría, whose discourse was filled with the word 'solidarity', referring both to its own activities and those of others. Members of the Vicaría talked about their work as mi labor de solidaridad ('my work of solidarity') (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 99) and about the

Vicaría's work as 'una labor de solidaridad' ('a work of solidarity'). The work groups in the Area Offices were referred to as 'solidarity teams'. The Vicaría's magazine was called 'Revista Solidaria' or 'Solidarity-oriented Magazine'. Solidarity suffused the Vicaría.

Solidarity had numerous meanings for the Vicaría. The Vicaría was careful to distinguish solidarity from charity. The bishop Jorge Hourtón, for example, stated: 'but solidarity also includes a concern for justice, and in that there is always an important task towards the future. Social justice is one thing and charity is another'. For the Vicaría directors (but not necessarily the employees), solidarity was also linked with faith: 'Evangelism takes on, at this time, an invisible face which is called solidarity... to which all have right'. (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 50)

The Vicaría also associated solidarity with creating links between people: 'All of this was very beautiful. It was the occasion for working together as a community, people got to know each other, they told each other their problems, they helped each other. In my opinion, in this lies the essence of solidarity work: bringing people together in common activities which allow them to improve their situation and at the same time find themselves as human beings' (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 65). 'Solidarity' was given as the reason for helping the victims of protests. Juanita Alvarado of Southern Office states: 'For the next protest we took it in turns to help if there were injured people. There was a lot of improvisation. But always, the criteria according to which we acted were

those of solidarity' (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 99). Solidarity, then, was synonymous with helping people in need and bringing people together.

In the Vicaría literature, solidarity was also something that existed in the people the Vicaría helped: 'Solidarity, then, was not a concept which professions had to develop in the field. It was something more complex, which existed amongst people, in the midst of pain and poverty. There was nothing to invent. Rather, you had to draw out the solidarity. You had to respond with a lot of creativity. To be attentive to solidarity gestures which were born in the people'. A social worker of the early years stated: 'you would meet with people who had been directly affected, relatives, prisoners, and in them there was tremendous strength, a lot of energy and life. Solidarity was there, in them' (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 17). Solidarity existed amongst those that suffered.

Some saw solidarity-oriented behaviour as having multiple functions at the same time. A priest, for example, saw *acción solidaria* or 'solidarity action' as having three main objectives: '... help, liberation and evangelising' (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 63). Solidarity for the Vicaría, therefore, had many different meanings. The Vicaría was aware of this and occasionally had 'reflection days' at which members reflected on the nature of solidarity work.

Solidarity was an ethic shared not only by the Vicaría but also by the arpilleristas, and nearly all survival and resistance organisations at the time. Arpillera groups, together with other survival organisations, were called *organizaciones solidarias* or 'solidarity

organisations'. The annual Christmas fair in which many of these organisations still participate is called the 'FESOL', short for 'Feria de la Solidaridad' or 'Solidarity Fair'. In the resistance movement in general, to show solidarity or *dar solidaridad* (literally 'give' solidarity) became almost 'the thing to do'; both to people in one's own group and to other groups. Shantytown women, for example, walked many miles to the church where the Agrupación was carrying out a hunger strike, to support the Agrupación members and bring them what they needed, expressing solidarity in this way:

'there I found what is real human solidarity. People from the area organisations who had walked for hours, came to see us. They made our beds... That gesture- in '78, at the most difficult period, gave us an enormous lesson in solidarity. We never forgot it'. (Violeta Morales, member of the Agrupación)

Solidarity in this case means helping each other and putting the interests of others before one's own. Members of the survival organisations and Vicaría saw solidarity as an alternative system to what they perceived as the regime's ethic of individualism and the free market, involving competition and the setting of one against the other. Solidarity, then, is an alternative discourse of resistance.

Today many of the shantytown arpilleristas see the dictatorship as a time in which people who suffered because of the regime, were 'solidarios' ('giving of solidarity'). They think that today this quality has been lost, and individualism, consumerism and materialism have taken over. For many arpilleristas, this solidarity went hand in hand with a sense of bonding, unity and *esprit de corps*. Ada of the Santa Adriana group described how her group had contact with other arpillera groups and there was a feeling of togetherness amongst all the groups, in the fight against Pinochet. To two potential

buyers who came to visit the workshop, Ada said that they half wished Pinochet was back because they used to be 'unified against a common enemy'. Margarita, an ex-member of the group, described this period of solidarity as: 'eran tiempos bonitos' ('those were good times'), with nostalgia in her voice. The disappearance of solidarity today is, in the arpilleristas' eyes, partly caused by and coincident with the dissolving of the arpillera network (see Chapter 6).

Ada's group still values solidarity today and aims to act accordingly. Ada once criticised the members of another arpillera group in her coordinadora as not being 'solidarios' even though they claim that they are. Some of the behaviours of Ada's group are motivated by a desire to help others rather than oneself. For example, when Sara was about to drop out of the workshop Ada revealed that it was because of her desperate need for money that the workshop had been running all this time. (However, to the potential buyers who visited the workshop she said it was for me that it kept going). When Ada was distributing the money earned at the FESOL, Juanita spontaneously gave her 500 pesos (US\$ 1.50) saving that it was to help cover the costs of transport and photocopying. Similarly, the Peñalolén group acted in a solidarity-oriented fashion by buying and taking food to one of their members when she was particularly hard-pressed financially. Such behaviours are similar to those of the working class African Americans studied by Liebow (1967, 216). Amongst these African Americans friendship was a system of mutual aid-giving in which the movement of money, goods, services, and emotional support flowed freely, out of loyalty and generosity, and according to need rather than as a calculated exchange.

Solidarity existed beyond the borders of Chile, extending from the arpilleristas through the exporters (the Vicaría) to the NGOs and solidarity groups in the Northern Hemisphere to, finally, the end-buyer, a person who sympathised with the cause. During the Pinochet regime, people abroad bought arpilleras to express solidarity; the Vicaría and NGOs abroad referred to this market as a *mercado solidario* or 'solidarity market' (see Chapter 4). Many of these people were exiles and Chileans who had been hunted down in Chile, but had escaped thanks to the Vicaría. Each buyer in the arpillera world was acting to help others less fortunate than themselves, rather than for their own benefit. Solidarity, then, was an ethic which linked the arpilleristas with other individuals across the globe. In this way the arpillera was the conveyor of values opposite to the consumerism and individualism which, for the arpilleristas and Vicaría, characterised Chile in the era of neo-liberal economics. The arpillera was also the concrete means whereby buyers could express their adherence to these values.

This network of international solidarity has now disintegrated, however (see Chapter 4). The end-buyers (in the arpilleristas' view) no longer see the arpillera as a way to help the oppressed, partly because they know that Chile is no longer a dictatorship, and also because they perceive Chile as the economic miracle of Latin America:

Jacqueline

And why did the demand [for arpilleras] go down?

Violeta

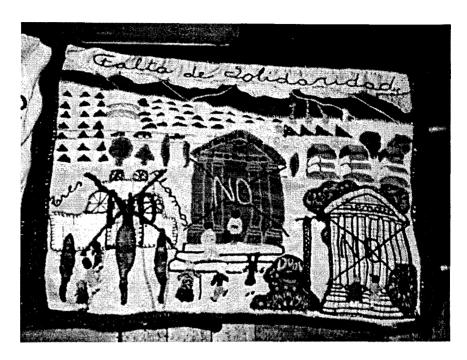
Because abroad, as time passed, they began to think that Chile's problems

(arpillerista) had been solved.

Now people buy because they find the arpillera decorative. The Vicaría now requires that the subject matter be non-political (see Chapter 5), catering for a market looking for attractive wall hangings. The resistance interests of the solidarity market have disappeared and commercial interests dominate.

Arpillera groups not functioning within the Vicaría structure also, in the past, stressed solidarity. The arpillera workshops of the Fundación Missio, Prisma's predecessor (see below), for example, were organised such that each woman in the group had a role, e.g. for buying, for advertising etc. One of these roles was *solidaridad*, defined in the Fundación literature as 'household problems, health, etc.' (Fundación Missio no date, 7). The activities of the person in this role are defined in the Fundación literature as: 'makes soups, makes bread, to help with money made by selling... and buying medicines, preparing the cabins in winter. Moral support in blows of fate... collect clothes to sell amongst themselves cheaply. Presents for children and women'. These functions are no longer fulfilled by the Prisma groups today, however.

Solidarity is a leitmotif of the Agrupación, as it is of the Vicaría. Its members felt they received much solidarity from other groups both in Chile and abroad. In the Rotafoglio the word solidarity appears several times. For example, there is a page devoted to the 'solidarity' of the 'international community' in the form of letters, cables, phone calls and the Church. Solidarity appears as a theme in the arpilleras of the Agrupación as well. In the 'Via Crucis' mural there is mention of solidarity both from the Vicaría and abroad.



An arpillera of the Via Crucis mural, expressing the lack of solidarity for the relatives of the disappeared. The buildings depicted are the prison 'Tres Alamos', the Courts of Justice, and Sendet (a government institution which the women visited for information about their loved ones.



An arpillera of the Via Crucis mural, depicting international solidarity (top left)

For the women of the Agrupación and the shantytown arpilleristas, solidarity acted like fuel, giving them the energy to continue the 'lucha' or 'struggle' to which they often refer.

The members of the Agrupación's Song Group value solidarity but regard as something of the past which has been sadly lost and replaced by widespread individualism. Toya, for example, told the story of the family which let her in to their home in the *población* when she was running away from soldiers after a protest, and thrust a baby into her arms so that she would look like a member of the household. She referred to this as the opening of 'la puerta solidaria' (the 'solidarity door'). Her reaction to this change is grief; she cried as she described how 'the soul of Chile has changed'.

Toya does believe that solidarity is not entirely lost, however. She recognises that there is

solidarity within the Agrupación and appreciates the fact that many of its members who did receive *reparación*' money shared it with her.

The Agrupación women expressed solidarity to numerous other groups. Toya, for example, described how the women of the Agrupación, after a few years, began to go and express solidarity for a number of different causes.

'with the Song Group [we would] go and express solidarity to those who were also struggling for a change. So we would go and express solidarity for those at Lota. At, at the strike. In the strike of the workers of Lota... We would go and express solidarity at hospitals. People, nurses, people on strike. For the blind'.

The expression Toya uses is 'entregar solidaridad' which literally means to 'give' solidarity. She and other women in the Agrupación see solidarity as something which they learnt through their experience with the Vicaría and resistance. Toya called it becoming 'more humane'.

Solidarity carries broadly similar meanings for all these different groups. It was an ethic shared by them all, and by the resistance movement in general terms. Solidarity also created community. The international exchanges of solidarity from foreign buyers to the arpilleristas in Chile made up a group of people with the same aim and ideology: all leftwing, all anti-Pinochet, all longing for the return of democracy and end of human rights abuses. This community, a 'second Chile', was opposed to the values of the dominant Chile and consisted of the poor, the left wing and the politically repressed.

Another form of solidarity was and still is active in the arpillera groups: women's solidarity under a repressive, 'machista' society. The women sometimes talk to each other about the situation at home (particularly their problems or feelings in connection with their families) and the other women listen, sympathise and give advice (see Chapter 7). Juana, for example, began to cry one day because her granddaughter had burnt herself with a hot iron, and she was afraid of what would happen when her husband found out. The other women consoled her, saying she should send her to day school, that the girl was a very difficult child, and that it was not her fault. When I got up and gave Juana a hug, Ada said 'Let her cry a bit, it does her good'. Sometimes the women just needed to be heard. Sara, for example, vented her frustrations to us about her uncommunicative husband. On another occasion she expressed her grief at her 'best' son marrying and that he will spend less time with her now. An atmosphere of supportiveness permeates the workshop, in what could be termed women's solidarity..

The arpillera, then, was a conduit and catalyst of group, political and gender solidarity. It bound arpilleristas in shantytowns to similar groups, to the resistance movement, the Vicaría and buyers in the Northern Hemisphere. Through contact with the arpillera people were marked as members of the 'second Chile' for which solidarity was an important ethic.

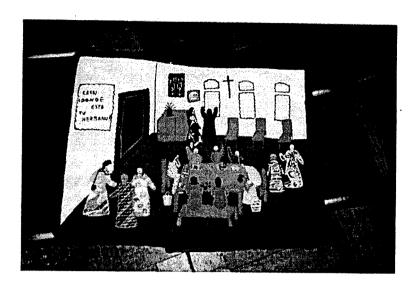
THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE ARPILLERISTAS OF THE SHANTYTOWN GROUPS AND AGRUPACION

The arpilleristas were all Catholics. Their contact with the Vicaría did not affect their religious stance or fervour significantly. This was partly because, as mentioned above, the Vicaría did not aim to evangelise but instead to help the poor. It was also because the Vicaría employees were not fervent Catholics but were rather employed on the basis of their technical skills. No evangelising happened in the workshops, and the Vicaría did not ask the women about their religious beliefs before they joined. After 1983 the Vicaría's directors began to recommend evangelising, but most of the employees rebelled against this. Evangelising was not carried out, therefore, and the women's religious stance did not alter. In general, the Vicaría was more interested in spreading the word about human rights abuses, both to the arpilleristas and to arpillera-buyers abroad (via the arpilleras), than about God.

Pressure to evangelise came in part from the priests in the parishes in which the Vicaría functioned. Some insisted that the evangelising had to be more evident for it to be truly ecclesiastical work. In the Southern Area, a social worker in the Vicaría team said:

'They asked us to mention Jesus' name explicitly in the training of young people and children. We said that it was inappropriate, the important thing was that the children lived the values of solidarity, that they valued the family, work. We insisted that we were evangelising in making people more dignified, in their process of organising'. (Vicaría de la Solidaridad 1991: 101).

Even if the Vicaría employees resisted the pressure to evangelise, contact with the Vicaría did result in the creation of some arpilleras with religious themes.



This Agrupación arpillera depicts the arpillera group at work with, on the wall, a poster saying 'Cain, where is your brother?'

On one occasion an arpillera-teacher asked the women to produce a series of arpilleras about the life of St. Matthew, for an exhibition in a local gallery. On another occasion the arpilleristas of the Agrupación made a mural depicting the *Via Crucis* or 'Way of the Cross' of their own experiences. As with Christ's passion, they depicted numerous stages. Also, a small number of arpilleras show Christ or mention God.



Arpillera showing Christ emerging from the Vicaría and, in the foreground, people with pickets saying 'bread', 'At last, the return', and 'Where are they?'

PRISMA DE LOS ANDES

Sec.

The Místicas and Peñiwén groups function within and are very marked by Prisma de los Andes. Prisma is a school-like institution which aims to train women to become micro-entrepreneurs and sell their work. It is part of a larger foundation called Fundación Cristo Vive (Christ Lives Foundation) which is run by a German nun and helps people in economically deprived areas of Santiago. It includes a professional training school for young men, a clinic and a kindergarten. The Foundation (and thereby Prisma) are supported by a number of European NGOs, Church organisations, Third World shops,

and individuals. Prisma also receives an income from the sale of its products. The Foundation has a marked Christian culture. Its introductory booklet describes: 'Above all there is love, that creating force, which has the right to free itself in each heart to 'work miracles', give life and happiness, awaken beauty and open the path to culture, faith and hope in human beings'. The director of Prisma is a Christian and also left wing. She used to train women in arpillera-making in the Vicaría.

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The Foundation's Prisma project began in March 1984. Initially there were 130 women being trained and this has grown to 200 women at any one time. The school-like character of Prisma and its need to sell its work to survive, influence not only the ampilleras the groups produce, but also the nature of the workshops. Women come here principally to receive an education, and unlike the ampillera groups of the Vicaría, do not have a history of political resistance or an overt ethic of solidarity. The training is practically free (costing the women only US\$ 2 to register). By the end of their first year, when the women have mastered the handicraft skills, Prisma pays them for their work and sells it both through its shop (in the front of its building) and abroad.

The training programme lasts three years (six semesters). It trains approximately eighteen groups of between eight and fifteen women at a time. These women come from different working-class neighbourhoods in Santiago. The classes Prisma gives are: management and maths, one handicraft skill (knitting, or appliqué), and 'personal development'. The courses are taught through lecturing, discussion, and the assignment and correcting of exercises, taking place on three afternoons (or mornings) a week, in the

dilapidated but pleasant old mansion which also houses Prisma's offices in downtown

Santiago. The teachers are ex-Prisma students for the most part. At the end of the training
the women receive certificates stating that they are qualified 'artisans'. They also receive
certificates at the end of each semester. When groups complete their Prisma training they
usually continue to sell their work to Prisma and use the institution's empty rooms. In
theory they may also sell elsewhere, but the Prisma management is thought by the women
to resent this in practice.

The women's personal development is one of Prisma's main aims, as stated in its mission document. This is in accord with the vision of the Fundación Cristo Vive which views its work with women as a learning process for them: 'We understand our work with the women as a process of learning and growth within our society, which represents an on-going challenge, requiring constant attention and giving'. The Fundación views women as marginalised within society: 'We know the life of women at the margins of human society, their misery and their dignity. We see their struggle for their role as women and for a dignified life in the family, in the *población* and in society' (Fundación Missio, no date, p. 2). Prisma's director views 'personal development' as something ongoing during the three years' training. In her view it a process whereby women acquire self-esteem, demand more respect and work sharing from family members and others, and learn about their rights to personal development and leisure. Her assumption is, in broad terms, that women are downtrodden slaves of the family needing 'liberation'.

Part of the aim of personal development is taken care of with personal development classes in the first or second semester. A Prisma employee relates how she came to respect herself more and demand respect from family members, changing her life and marriage from miserable to happy. Then each of the women in the group talk about their problems and are listened to. The group discusses these problems and also talks about ways to prevent the family taking advantage of the women. The groups like this course very much and say that it helped them and also bonded them together.

As well as teaching its own courses, Prisma informs the women of other management courses and scholarships on offer in the city and encourages them to attend. Two women in the religious arpillera group, for example, attended the Catholic University's micro-entrepreneurship course. Furthermore, Prisma organises a two-week summer camp for the women, a theatre production, large barbecues on important days in Chile's calendar, and various other festivals such as for certificate awarding and the anniversary.

Prisma has employees working on the purchase and distribution of materials, stock management, the reception and shop, development of new products, and export management. Some of the employees who work in these areas also teach. Several Prisma employees take part in the marketing and selling of products in different ways. Prisma has a history of French volunteers involved in marketing. Also, a team of three women (one was from the Peñiwén group) invents and develops new products. The director, Valentina Bonne, is an artist-turned micro-entrepreneurship trainer.

The Groups within Prisma

The groups function like 'cohorts' within Prisma. For both groups, the arpillera part of the training involves one afternoon a week, for three years. The Misticas group meets on Tuesdays from 2 to 6 and the Peñiwén group meets on Thursdays from 3 to 7. (The women will have seen each other on one or two other occasions during the week, at either their 'organisation' or 'administration' class). The classroom in which the groups meet is a relatively spartan room with a table, ten wooden chairs, pictures on the walls and a blackboard. The rooms are lit with neon lights and are dark even in summer. In winter they are very cold and smell of paraffin from the stove when it is provided. All the classrooms in Prisma are set around two pleasant, small courtyards graced by trees and plants. Some of the other rooms off the courtyards are offices or store rooms. Women are always passing through the courtyards and they greet each other in a friendly way, often sitting on the benches against the walls for a brief chat. There is an atmosphere of friendliness, 'women's sisterliness' and safety about the place.

Each group has five individuals with well-defined management roles: president, treasurer, welfare person, secretary and stock manager. This formal structure is imposed by the Prisma staff as part of the group's training. Another form of organisation imposed by Prisma is the need for meetings and minute taking. Occasionally, the teacher of the administration class tells the group to have a meeting. The group suggests topics to be

covered in the meeting and the group secretary takes notes. On another day the meeting itself takes place. The ladies work through the topics and voice their opinions about them, taking decisions whilst the secretary writes down what was said.

The religious arpillera group: 'Las Místicas'

This group formed in 1993 (although some members joined from another class in 1994). It gave itself the name: 'Las Místicas' or 'The Mystics' towards the end of my stay when a name was needed for an exhibition I organised. The arpilleras the group make all have religious themes and are in the form of appliquéd stoles and greeting cards (arpilleras with a religious subject matter, stuck onto a piece of card), and wall hangings. Independently of Prisma, the group made linen cloths to cover the chalice and bags for the host (they found a religious shop interested in buying such products). There are nine people in this group, with an extra woman joining two months before my departure. Most group members are in their forties; the youngest is thirty-four and the eldest sixty-four. Some of the members work for an income outside the home occasionally (sewing, ironing or cleaning, typically). All are married (there was one widow) and all except one have children; most also had grandchildren. They live in different working class or lower middle-class neighbourhoods of Santiago.

During the arpillera class the women sit around a table in the neon-lit room in Prisma. They sew, glue cloth onto card (asking each other for pieces of cloth, thread, and

scissors in the process) and listen to what the teacher (first Lia and then Valentina, the director of Prisma) is telling them. There is always a deadline (given by the teacher) for handing in the work. Other activities include distributing materials, collecting finished work, distributing payment and, in the middle of each session, going to the kitchen for tea.



The Misticas group at work in the classroom



The women work next to the teacher (right) in class



The teacher shows a group member how to glue her arpillera onto card

The women carry out numerous activities other than work-related ones during the class. They collect money for outings; work on and ask each other about how to make the new religious items for their buying outside Prisma; show each other the illustrated bibles they collect for inspiration for their arpilleras; tell each other how they acquired them (usually it was from Jehovah's Witnesses who came to the door); swap recipes, and look at a magazine occasionally. One or two members sell home-made bread or cake, both within and outside the group.

The making of arpilleras is mainly individual, but to a degree collective. The women work on their own cards or stoles individually and for the most part at home. However, during the handicraft class they often participate each other's arpillera-making by commenting on the arpilleras in question, either in a one-on-one situation, or as a group. Frequently one arpillerista pins her work up on the wall and asks the whole class to comment, as the group had been taught. The corrected woman then goes about correcting (individually) what she has done.

When the teacher leaves the room (as she often does) the women talk freely.

Typically, they spontaneously relate an incident that has happened to them during the week. They also talk about their children or husbands, and share interesting news, be it about neighbours, national news on television, or something they had seen in a magazine, such as the story of 'the fattest woman in Chile'. They often joke about men and sex, never mentioning sex explicitly, however. The atmosphere is jokey and affectionate; there is a great deal of laughter. The class resembles a group of good friends getting

together. Within the group there are dyads or triads of 'extra close' friends. All are very sweet to each other, a behaviour which is valued in Chile (the word 'amorosa', or 'sweet', is often mentioned). They are less sweet, however, to a woman who complains about her health all the time and to a woman who joined towards the end of my stay.

Despite the overall harmony, there is an undercurrent of tension over leadership in the Misticas group. The denoted leader (Cecilia) performs the formal tasks a leader is supposed to do and enforces discipline (jokingly telling the women to hurry up with their work, for example). But within the group there is a more natural and charismatic leader (Eli). This does not lead to open conflict and both they work together, as my fieldnotes reveal: 'Ceci initiated the counting of finished arpillera cards and Eli picked up her lead, writing down the number on a sheet of paper and taking on the organising. Ceci did not seem put out by this. She collected together the cards and took them to the storage room.' However, Eli and Cecilia are not close and Cecilia does on occasion seem a little tense as a result of Eli's spontaneous leadership. However, the class has other leaders, as my notes reveal: 'Elena is recognised as another form of leader: the technical expert. It is with her that the ladies consult for technical matters. Julia, on the other hand, is the acclaimed expert on stitching.'



Elena, the technical expert

When I joined the group it only sold to Prisma (but, like the women who sold to the Vicaría, did not think of this as selling). When I suggested that they sell in shops as well as to Prisma they became very interested in the idea. Three of the women and I visited two religious shops in my neighbourhood and the women introduced themselves and their products to the shopkeepers, showing samples. Both shops sold religious and church products such as bibles and pictures. The religious group left some arpillera cards and stoles as samples in the shops on consignment. One shopkeeper did not succeed in selling anything, but the second sold two stoles and ordered something the women had never produced before: linen chalice covers (similar to white handkerchiefs) and white

bags for the host. With remarkable flexibility, the women worked out how to make these objects. The technical expert (Eliana) knew what they should look like and how to sew them, and she taught the others who learnt very rapidly. They worked on them at home, correcting and teaching each other during class time when Valentina left the room. They received a small order for these products. Their rapid and flexible adaptation to this new product (considering it was not anything like the arpillera) suggests, along with their work-focused meetings, that the ethic of this group was 'professionalism'.

The Peñiwén Group

The other Prisma group (which called itself *Peñiwén* (meaning 'brothers'), for the exhibition) formed in 1993 and was in its sixth and last semester by the time I left. Like the Místicas group, the Peñiwén group makes appliqué works but the range of objects made is wider, including pencil cases, pictures and children's clothes. The themes of their appliqué work include Chilean landscapes, animals, and images of houses and children. The group produces a 'map' or hanging picture which integrates four scenes from the length of Chile.

There are seven women in this group, most in their late forties. Two of its members are more intensively involved in Prisma because they make up the 'emergency workshop', involving designing and creating samples to send abroad. The members of the Peñiwén group live in a variety of working and lower middle class neighbourhoods. None

work for a regular income outside the home although most had done so many years ago.

There are two university graduates in the group; the others are mostly high school educated. Two of the group's members have lived abroad, one in Argentina and one in Spain.

Gustavo, Valentina's husband, is the group's teacher. He encourages the women to create new forms of arpilleras (e.g. the map), and sparks discussion about the work they have done, inviting criticism. Like the teachers of the Místicas group, he is in the classroom intermittently, disappearing for long stretches to work at other tasks of his own. When Gustavo is out of the room the women laugh and talk most freely; when he is in the room they concentrate more on their work. The dominant ethic of the group, like that of Las Místicas, is professionalism and productivity.

The conversation and atmosphere is very similar to that of the Misticas group.

The women talk about their husbands and families, what has happened them during the week, their work, the news, and people they know. There is a good deal of joking.

However, the women in this group have, unlike Las Misticas, a very strong culture of rebelliousness towards the Prisma employees, as well as towards their own families.

The attitude of rebelliousness and defiance is directed principally but not only at Prisma employees and manifests itself in several ways. The women pay no attention to Gustavo, for example, when he asks them to move to another classroom, as if to affirm their independence and show that they are not going to be bossed around. They did not

include Gustavo as one of them when they were working out who would receive invitations for the exhibition. They argue with the directors of Prisma over money and orders and one of them, Maria Mercedes, has self-consciously taken on the rebel's role. They view Prisma with slight cynicism. They are aware that they are being poorly paid and saw Prisma's offer of an 'internship' once they finish their course as an attempt to continue to use their talents. The culture of resistance manifests itself in other ways: they resisted my integration into the group, and they chose a Mapuche (Chilean Indian) name for their group (the Mapuche language carries connotations of resistance).

Their rebelliousness stretches to their home lives. The women staunchly resist opposition from the family, against their attending the course.

'My husband said "what are you going for?", "what is the point in going?", "what will you learn?". Of course, I have an engineering degree, but he thinks that that's quite enough. "No, I want to learn other things". "And what are they going to teach you?" he said. "Well, I'll see when I get there."

(Maria Elena, Peñiwén group member)

Maria Mercedes resists opposition in a different way; she has never told her husband how long the course is, saying originally that it was only one year long. She jokingly told us one day that her husband had called her to the kitchen and asked her very seriously when the course was going to end. The most vocal members of the group (Maria Elena, Maria Mercedes, Flor Maria and Marianela) are the most defiant; the others are less so.

The attitude of defiance, which the group so frequently displays, is contrary to the attitude of women entering Prisma; such women are usually meek and lacking in self-

confidence. This might be a result of being at the end of the training period and so having nearly completed the trajectory of increasing self-esteem Prisma claims the women go through. Part of their self-confidence may also come from the fact the group's talents have been recognised. It may also be accounted for by the fact that several of its members play an active role within Prisma but outside of her group; one, for example, is in a fund-raising group for a summer camp.

Paradoxically, despite its defiance, this group does not act to decrease its dependence on Prisma. When I asked them what contact name and number they wanted to give for the exhibition (in case a visitor to the exhibition wanted to buy some work) they gave a Prisma staff member's name and number, saying that all their orders come through Prisma. They stuck to this position even when I pointed out that they might begin to function independently as a workshop if they put one of their own names and numbers.

Both Prisma groups may be said to have a culture of rebelliousness against the 'oppression' of the family. The women in Prisma do appear to have higher self-esteem than the women of the Vicaría groups; they are also more rebellious as far their families are concerned.

THE 'LOMAS DE MACUL' EMBROIDERY GROUP

The Macul group is independent of an organising institution. Its eight members carry out the buying of materials and the selling of their products alone. One of its members (Catalina) is legal representative whilst another (Juana) is 'co-representative'. A salient feature of the group is its independence, and with it an ability to draw on local resources such as the municipality and personal contacts.



The women of the group are entirely responsible for its management. Catalina and Nancy do the accounts.

All the members of the group live in a large lower middle-class and working class municipality in Southern Santiago called Macul. They are all mothers and most of them grandmothers. None of them have full-time employment outside the home although a few have engaged in income-earning activities at different times in their lives. All have participated in numerous neighbourhood organisations (such as mothers' centres, gym classes and neighbourhood councils) and two are at present directors of mothers' centres;

a third is treasurer. They are prominent in the local community (particularly amongst women) and have, for the most part, the self-confidence that comes with such prominence (challenging and making requests of the mayor, for example). Most support the Christian Democrat party (centre-right), although one is right wing and pro-Pinochet.

They had started to embroider twenty years ago, as members of another group in which they were trained and which sold their wares for them. When they were staffing a market stall, however, they noticed the discrepancy between what they were being paid and what the customer paid for their goods, and abandoned the group. The mutiny was led by Catalina, who, with her husband's financial aid, formed the new group in competition with the old one. The group got its name 'Bordadoras Lomas de Macul' from the neighbourhood within Macul in which the women live. Despite its current independence, traces of this older institution still exist. The distribution system of the Macul group reflects the character of this older group in particular; they sell at handicraft fairs above all, as did the other groups (See Chapter 4).

The group meets every other Wednesday from 3.30 to 6 or 7 p.m. in a single-storey, two-room, brick building which also serves as a Mothers' Centre. Usually the first activity of the meetings is the handing in of work to Catalina, who notes down what she receives in a thick exercise book. There is no quality control process; everything is accepted. Catalina distributes money if there has been a sale, using the exercise book to check the amount due. She also informs the group about potential sales and sales from her house, municipal events to which they had been invited, or exhibitions. Often there are

decisions to take; these are taken jointly, usually by Catalina introducing a topic, the women discussing it and drifting off on to another topic, and Catalina finally insisting that they come up with a decision. The group organises the acquisition of raw materials by discussion. For example, they often try to obtain wool from the mayor and discuss how they will ask him. The group buys the cloth for the embroideries in large rolls which people take cuts from as they need them, during the meetings. The women buy their wool individually, however. During most meetings there is a tea break involving considerable preparation (one or two women go out to buy bread or cakes).



Maria and Catalina cut cloth

Most of the conversation during the meetings is not work-centred. The typical topics are: local government, public figures (especially the mayor), common

acquaintances, husbands and children, practical matters such as where to find cheap food items, infrastructural developments (e.g. the paving of roads), the Mother's Centres, and personal activities of the week (Raquel frequently told us about her gym class, for example). Despite such wide-ranging topics of conversation, professionalism and productivity are the dominant ethics of the group. There is no hint of the solidarity of the Santa Adriana group.

There is considerable conflict in this group. Unlike the other groups, the Macul embroiderers argue about money whenever there is a sale. The atmosphere becomes tense as Catalina goes through what is due to each person. Another woman (usually Nancy) checks her calculations. Catalina then distributes the money. There is also tension when the group argues about organisational issues. Catalina often complains about the women not taking decisions, and the group argues about how the records of their work handed in are kept. Despite this antagonism, the women are usually sweet to each other; there is much laughter and smiling during the meetings, and they appear fond of each other. A certain formality of relations exists, apparent from the fact that the ladies called each other by their first names with the pre-fix *Señora*.

The antagonism that emerges when the issue of money arises, runs deep. The group is divided into two camps, with four women grouping around Catalina the leader, and four resisting her. This division originated with an exhibition in New York, for which communication was badly managed, resulting in misunderstanding, resentment and the feeling of having been overlooked in the decision-making process. Not all the women are

conscious of this division; Maria Muñoz, Raquel, Nancy and Gertrudis (an ex-member) talked about it in interviews, whilst Catalina knows that something is wrong but does not know what. A possible explanation for these conflicts is the fact that there are four experienced community leaders in the group. The group continues to function despite antagonism partly because the women are proud of their artwork, and of their achievement in terms of running a workshop independently.

THE FUNCTION OF THE GROUPS FOR THE WOMEN

The arpillera groups had numerous functions for the women and organisers.

Income-earning

The economic incentive in making arpilleras has always been important. As Brett (1986: 37) suggests: 'For most of the women patchwork making is valued for two essential reasons: it can bring some money to their homes, and it can carry a message to other parts of the world.' Initially, nearly all the arpilleristas connected with the Vicaría joined the groups because they needed the money to feed their families because their husbands were unemployed. When their husbands returned to work they needed the arpillera as extra income; and often arpillera money goes towards paying the bills.

Arpillerista

At the end of the month you had some money, you would come home with

some money to contribute to the house.

Jacqueline

And what was your husbands' reaction when you came with a contribution?

Arpillerista

In my case, he doesn't get too bothered because I contribute money in the house, because as we have bills, we put together our money, and he puts all of his, and I put a bit. I say "We will do this and this", we plan things, and they feel

happy because it is a contribution. (Member of the Villa Sur group)

Some need it to sustain the household, when their husbands have very low pensions. Sara falls into this category; she was very upset when her arpilleras were not bought by Ada's friend who runs a Women's Centre. Brett's (1986: 12) notion is somewhat romanticised: People are turned into artists by the pressure of events (the fact that they have no training does not hold them back), pressures which heighten a need for art in its multiple role of therapy, desire, communication, memory and love of beauty, which is present in everybody but which is stifled in modern normality.' The economic incentive is the overriding one for the arpilleristas, especially the Agrupación women, whose family breadwinner had disappeared.

For most arpilleristas today money is less important a consideration than it was during the Pinochet years. The other members of the Santa Adriana group are less dependent than Sara on the money. None of the women are so desperate for money that they request that Juanita share with them the income from the 'waipe'. Many of the women of the other groups use their arpillera money to buy presents for their children or something special for themselves.

Denunciation

All the groups connected with the Vicaría used to make arpilleras to denounce the political repression and economic crisis. It is not the case, as Brett (1986: 34) suggests, that 'as the movement spread, its therapeutic function changed to one of conscious communication, not only with one another but with the world outside.' Rather, the denunciatory function existed from the beginning. The arpilleristas and Vicaría wanted the world to know what was happening in Chile (See Chapters 4 and 5). The importance of denunciation for the arpilleristas of the Agrupación in particular is demonstrated by the fact that they abandoned the workshop when the Vicaría began insisting that they make cheerful arpilleras (and imposing too many rules). Denunciation is not, however, an important function for the shantytown arpilleristas connected with the Vicaría today; they make bucolic arpilleras.

For the Song Group denunciation remains important. Their rehearsals have an air of earnestness about them; they go to work, so as to be able to denounce. The Song Group, like the Agrupación, continues to be motivated by the desire to make known what has happened to their relatives so that the nation does not forget.

An Escape from Isolation

Another important function the groups have for the women is an escape from the isolation and drudgery of the home. During the meetings, the exchanging of news, the sharing of problems and information, and joking and laughing are very prominent.

During interviews, the women frequently say they were shut up within their homes, practically never going out, until they joined the workshop. The expression: las cuatro paredes (the four walls) in the context of 'No veia nada más que las cuatro paredes' ('I saw nothing but the four walls') came up in numerous interviews (see also chapter 7). It describes being shut at home, and implies a sense of boredom, frustration and stagnation. Women join the workshop to escape this.

The women are relatively isolated socially. It is not unusual for women rarely to leave the neighbourhood in which they live (e.g. Juana and Sara of Sta. Adriana) and in some cases to have contact with hardly anyone except for neighbours and the shopkeepers in the neighbourhood. The women spend most of their time at home (except for when they go to the local shops or take their grandchildren or children to school.) In many cases the women had not participated in any sort of group for years before joining the workshops (see Chapter 7). Their social isolation is understandable in the context of machismo, which dictates that the place for a *pobladora* is the home (see Chapter 7). Being out of the home and talking to other people in the street is looked down upon. Husbands enforce this; Ada's husband, for example, complains that she goes out of the house a lot whereas his mother never did so. Husbands discourage women from working outside the home and the women themselves are, in some cases, glad not to have to.

Juanita, for example, told me she considered herself lucky as she did not have to work

outside the home.

Isolation is not a necessary condition of the women's lives, however. There are a small number of spaces in which it is acceptable for women to function. These are limited to the Mothers' Centres (a room in the neighbourhood in which women meet and are given courses on cooking, hair-cutting, handicrafts and the like), the neighbourhood councils (in which problems of the neighbourhood are discussed), handicraft workshops and increasingly, the gym class. The arpillera groups are one of the acceptable spaces. However, there are limits to their acceptability. They must not take the women away from the duties of the home and serving the husband ('atender al marido') for too long. Husbands are not pleased about their wives spending much time there. Sara, for example, was very worried when the workshop went on unusually long one week and the following week left earlier than usual. Social pressures prevent the women from joining many groups.

The workshop is a way to escape isolation. Repeatedly in interviews, the women mentioned 'compartir' as a reason for joining and staying in the workshop. Compartir means literally to share, but its meaning in this context is to be in the company of others; it implies a warmth of relations. The women talk of their need to: 'compartir con otras personas' or 'be with others'. Leaving the house to work in a workshop responds to a need for contact with other people than the members of ones own family.

Meeting friends

Once they have been in the workshop a long time, the meetings become like meetings with old friends. As Adela of Melipilla states, 'How can we not be close after having seen our children grow up?' All the groups except for the Santa Adriana group (who cannot afford it) have a tea break, at which work is forgotten. Sometimes no work is done (e.g. the Santa Adriana group). When I asked Juana why the group got together despite not having any arpillera orders, she said 'para la amistad' or 'for friendship', and explained that they would not see each other otherwise. As with any group of old friends, they have shared jokes which come up again and again. The Místicas group, for example, always jokes about Adriana's eagerness to make photocopies. The Santa Adriana group jokes about Juana's love of jote (a mixture of red wine and coca cola). Fondness for each other becomes a reason to meet.

However, the extent of the friendship is limited. Some members are closer than others, and some feel different from the rest. Ada, for example, feels different from Juana and Sara. She has commented to me that it is difficult to get them out of their neighbourhood, 'ellas son así' ('they are like that'), and that it is unlikely that they would take a course such as her management course. Also, if the friendship is important to Juana, it is not so important to Estrella (the youngest member) who views the women in the group as 'compañeras más que amigas' or 'work companions rather than friends'. She left the group in January.



With the Song Group and arpillera group of the Agrupación the meeting of friends took on a deeper significance. Having a disappeared relative often resulted in rejection from former friends, neighbours and even family. Doris, for example, said that all her family began to shun her for fear of being at risk by association with her. During some performances of the Song Group, people threw stones at the vehicle in which they travelled. The members of these groups found themselves socially isolated. Not only were they rejected; for many years people in Chile did not believe that disappearances had occurred. Even people who did believe and sympathise could not, in the women's eyes, fully understand their situation. The Agrupación, Song Group and arpillera groups in these circumstances, became the only places where one could meet with people who fully understood, were supportive, and willing to be friends. The women occasionally refer to the Agrupación as their 'family'. Doris called it her 'second family, or even my first'. With years of contact with each other, the groups have become like a social club in a way. Here, the women meet their best friends. The Agrupación's acts, in particular, involve women catching up on each other's news.

The Maintenance of an Identity

Neuhouser found, from his study of women in Brazil, that the women continued to perform an activity because to not do it would mean losing the identity it bestows on them. 'Individuals will act consistently, even when there are costs to consistent behavior,

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if they have become committed to a specific course of action. One form that this commitment can take is that through previous behavior individuals may commit themselves to a particular presentation of self in social interaction. The more the individual is invested in that presentation of self, the more consistent their behavior regardless of the costs' (1989:11). The Song Group women continue to perform and attend the acts of the Agrupación in part because they are committed to an identity, that of relative of the disappeared. Not only do they introduce themselves before a performance by the title of 'I am the mother [or daughter, etc.] of...' without giving their own names, but two members have visiting cards with, below their names, the words: 'Familiar de Detenido-Desaparecido' ('Relative of a Detained-Disappeared person'). They have become a 'relative' before all else. Not all 'relatives' are active in the groups, however. Edita and Alicia used to be members of the arpillera group and still consider themselves mothers of a disappeared person, but have left the group. In both cases it was for reasons of psychological health; they believed and had been advised that it is unhealthy to keep 'obsessing about the subject'. The identity is, for some women only, a reason to participate in the Song or arpillera groups.

For the Macul group, the preservation of an identity of cultural representatives of Macul, is important. They commented proudly that, on the occasion of a speech, the Mayor had called them 'representatives of Macul'. The women have a local prominence which allows them to interact with important local figures such as the mayor, and accede to official realms. For most members of Macul and even for people in other neighbourhoods, they are 'las bordadoras' ('the embroiderers').

'I hadn't been to the gym class for two weeks because I had had a lot to do, with the end of the year coming up. It was so nice when I arrived, they hugged me because they saw me on TV, another one had the newspaper [in which an article about the group had appeared]... I went to the hospital to see Mrs. Maria Duarte. Last Thursday. And on the stairs someone recognised me... It's very comforting, all that'.

(Raquel of the Macul group)

Like the women in Brazilian shantytowns studied by Neuhouser (1995), the Macul women have an identity which they do not wish to give up (the Brazilian women, according to Neuhouser, mobilised to preserve their identity as mother).

The identity of the groups is centred around different factors. For the Song Group, their political identity (as relatives of victims of political circumstances) is important. For the Macul group, it is location that is the most important part of their identity as embroidery group. They often mentioned the group from which they had splintered off (also called 'Bordadoras de Macul'), insisting with passion every time that they are from Macul whereas the other group is not. Their claim is to an authenticity which they view the other group as lacking. (In reality, some members of the other group are indeed from Macul, but the majority are from elsewhere. The group is not from Vitacura - an elegant neighbourhood-, as my group claimed).

Learning

During the Pinochet years learning was an important function of the arpillera groups, which became centres of informal education: 'While it might be tempting to view

these as housewives' organizations having purely economic goals, that would be incorrect. They have provided these women with a focus for political organizing and self-education, as well as a means of self-empowerment' (Chuchryk 1989: 154). Learning continues to be important for arpilleristas today. Considerable learning does occur in all the workshops; the women learn to communicate (many come to the group, for example, not daring to talk and slowly open up), to organise themselves, work to a schedule, negotiate with clients or potential clients, run a business, to be disciplined, to make a group function harmoniously, tolerate different personalities, co-ordinate efforts to work towards a common cause, subordinate individual conflict to the benefit of the group and to have a close relationship with someone who is not a family member. In one case only (Macul's) they learn to make demands on and to communicate with other local authorities.

The Prisma workshops in particular, are strongly motivated by the desire to learn. Some (but not all) of the women are very aware that they learn through the group. The Misticas group in particular, values learning, which is one of the main reasons the women joined the group. The women in this group have had few years of schooling, either because they married at a very young age (Eli, for example, was fourteen when she married) or because their family could not afford or did not wish to keep them in school. Most were primary-school educated and had not completed secondary school. Child-

¹⁹ Taking courses is popular amongst very many women from the working class in Chile. Many join *Centros de Madres* (Mothers' Centres) which continually offer courses of different kinds, ranging from cooking to flower arranging. Many women accumulate courses and certificates and proudly showed me a number during interviews.



rearing made further learning difficult. However, by the time they are in Prisma their children are young adults and no longer require so much of their time.

Their interest in learning manifests itself in several ways. Lucy, for example, tries to sit next to the teacher to learn as much as possible. Adriana commented over tea one day that they are privileged in that they have had the benefit of courses such as organisation and administration, whereas other groups do not have the opportunity to learn these subjects. Three of the women have signed up for a course on microentrepreneurship run by the Catholic University. One of these three women wishes to complete her secondary education. The group's successful experience of independent selling has made all the women keen to continue after their training at Prisma and most of them attended a week-end course about setting up and running a business, run by another training institution.

The interest in learning is mediated by the cost. Several women mentioned that they signed up in Prisma partly because the training was practically free. Their attendance at the micro-entrepreneurship courses run by the University depends on their receiving financial aid. When the cost is low, they are willing to invest in education. However, once they have joined Prisma the desire to learn strengthens and a small number of women try to complete secondary or even university education. Valentina, the director, actively encourages this. The women's contact with other women doing the same in Prisma also encourages them, making it an acceptable thing to do. All the women in Prisma know, for example, that Marilu the secretary and 'personal development' teacher who started off



like them with few years of schooling, is taking a university degree now. Learning is culturally acceptable within the social context of Prisma.

Not only do they value the learning in itself, but they value the status it gives them. Adriana told a gentleman she met at a social event outside Prisma, that they are 'micro-empresarias' (micro-entrepreneurs). She later joked about having told him this in a very proud tone of voice implying 'we're not just anyone, you know'. The learning differentiates them from the average working-class woman.

Therapy

Art serves a therapeutic function in many instances: 'art becomes a means of therapy in order to survive the trauma of events, or, in a kind of updating of what was once considered the function of shamanism in tribal societies, to "give structure and coherence to the unfathomable and intangible" (Brett 1986: 11). For most of the groups, therapy is one of the functions of the artistic activity they carry out. For some, the act of sewing is therapeutic. Raquel of the Macul group stressed she finds embroidery therapeutic and forgets her worries this way. Anita of the Agrupación described the initial motivation for making arpilleras as therapeutic and economic. Gloria Torres, who claims she initiated the Agrupación workshop, said that the original purpose was therapy. Winnie Lira (who was not present at the start of the workshops) suggests:

'and we went about inventing different ways to depict their drama. Nor was there, in the beginning, the intention of denouncing, through denunciation. They were just for therapy. Then, when foreigners arrived, I remember a French man who helped me a lot, very important, who said that it was were very beautiful all this, 'can I take it to photograph it?', and that's where it all started, but in the beginning it was only to empty everything they had inside'.

Not all members of this group or other groups find arpillera-making therapeutic, however. Emilia Meza of the Agrupación's arpillera group, for example, pointedly said that she did not find arpillera-making therapeutic. For some women therapy is incidental; they are more interested in what they learn (as in some members of the Místicas group's case, for example).

Usually, when the women use the word 'therapy' in reference to the making of arpilleras, they mean a relaxation from tensions rather than a thorough therapeutic process. Raquel of 'Lomas de Macul', for example, described how she becomes so absorbed with her embroidery that she feels as if she is living the scene she is creating. In the case of the Agrupación, therapy was conceived of (by the Vicaría) as a way to help the women cope with the pain and anxiety of losing their loved ones. They were encouraged to depict the scene of the disappearance in their first arpillera, the assumption being that in expressing their pain they would diminish it.

The workshops are also therapeutic in the sense that they enable the women to escape from the tensions and duties of the home. They were a place in which the women relaxed (except for the Macul group, which often quarrelled), laughing and telling each other stories. They did what they enjoyed doing, in the company of people they liked; it

was something they looked forward to very much. Adriana of Las Místicas, for example, related how she gets up at 7 am, full of enthusiasm, on the days that she goes to Prisma.

A number of the women have problems with wife beating (indeed, domestic violence is high on the agenda of the Ministry of Women's Affairs) and talk of psychological and physical violence. This is a factor which, in a few instances, makes them join a workshop. Ada, for example, suffered from 'psychological violence' and spoke to her sister-in-law who asked the workshop if they would consider taking her in. Both she and her sister-in-law considered it in terms of its therapeutic function.

Therapy for others occurs in sessions with therapists, organised by the Vicaría. Ada of the Taller Laboral said that the group used to be given therapy by a psychologist who came to the arpillera workshop; and she lamented that fact that they no longer have someone who could perform this function. The two Prisma groups, likewise, have had group therapy (the class called 'personal development') as part of their course programme.

Women's Solidarity

The groups are a space in which women help each other. Coming together in groups allows them to communicate and be listened to by women facing similar obligations. They often talk about feelings and problems, usually connected with being a



woman. All except for two members of the Místicas group, for example, discussed their problems (such as an ill mother, or lazy family members in the home) with the other women. In the workshop they can complain to each other and receive sympathy. They can also feel reassured that they are not the only ones with these problems and can exchange solutions.

The workshops are also places where the women support each other by encouraging each other with their endeavours. Eli of the Misticas group, for example, encouraged María Eugenia to take the micro-entrepreneurship course. They also support each other by giving advice. The Misticas group, for example, warned one woman against a new boyfriend. They support each other's 'liberation' in the home. In the Misticas group, increasingly as the year went on, there were tales about refusing to do housework, and joking about the family's reaction. Ceci, for example, announced to her family that she was going to the seaside for the week end, and that they had to manage alone. She described this to us with delighted, triumphant glee and the women were very amused and supportive. Here, the women together oppose their traditional roles.

The women also help each other by sharing information useful to the fulfilment of their roles as mothers and housewives: where to buy cheap shoes and material, and how to cook a certain dish, and other matters of household management. They also exchange information about local government, local infrastructure, people they know, health, and taxes for example. The Macul group, for example, discussed insurance on one occasion, as my fieldnotes reveal:

'Sra. C. [Catalina] mentioned that the Mayor had wanted to discuss something about schools and added "bueno, como no tengo hijos en el colegio, no se nada del sistema" ["well, as I don't have children in school, I don't know anything about the system"]. Later she said "hay un sistema de niveles con la Fonasa, no tenía idea" ["there is a system of levels with Fonasa (the health insurance system), I had no idea"] and R. who knew about it explained. "Es según el sueldo" ["it goes according to salary"]. Sra. C. talked about it like suggesting they all check it out because it might be useful to them. In fact, they often discuss these bureaucratic things, giving each other hints about how they work or how to get around the problems.' (30th August 1995)

The workshop is also a place where they can consult each other over queries or problems they might have, and air their ideas. They gain information which enables them to exercise more control over their environment.

Having a Voice

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The arpillera making is an excuse for a get-together which is a response to a need for a certain power and voice. Women are relegated to second place in unions, parties and neighbourhood associations, the principal areas in which community members can have a public voice. Although they have considerable power in the family (principally as mothers), this power is limited in that they are under their husbands' control. The workshop is a space in which they can exercise power. They can take on management roles, or participate in decision-making by chipping in with their point of view. Usually the president will present a problem to the workshop (e.g. a problem posed from outside-a commercial problem or local community administration problem) and will ask what the others think should be done. In this way women have a say in the organisation of an institution outside their own homes.

Finally, through the workshop they achieve an identity in the community. They are a recognised institution in the Municipality, called upon by the Mayor when he organises meetings of all the institutions. Moreover, they themselves gain a recognised identity through participation in the workshop: the identity of 'arpillerista'. In all these different ways, the workshop enables them to participate in public life; to become active citizens.

Intimacy

The arpillera groups are one of the few spaces available to women for communication on an intimate level. This is particularly clear in the Santa Adriana group. During arpillera-making, the conversation occasionally becomes very personal, covering a health or family problem. Sara, for example, told us on one occasion that her grandson came to live with her and was not doing well in school. Juanita complained several times that she is tired of looking after three grandchildren. Sometimes it is feelings rather than specific problems, which are aired. For example, Juanita complained many times: 'nadie me quiere' ('no-one loves me'). Such intimate matters as the relationship between husband and wife are not usually discussed, although the women know about each other's marital problems in a general sense.

The more intimate conversations come up in a casual way in the midst of other topics such as what colour to use for part of an arpillera or news in the neighbourhood. They are most often brought up after we have been sitting for some time. Usually the problem is expressed in an unemotional way. One notable exception was when Juanita started to cry whilst telling us that her granddaughter had burnt herself and a blanket with the iron and that she did not dare to tell her husband. The ladies listening appeared to be used to tears for Ada said to let her cry so that she can 'desahogarse' (give vent to her feelings). When a problem or feeling is expressed the others listen and make sympathetic comments. Advice is never asked for and rarely is it given.

The women's openness with each other is aided by the fact that they have known each other for a long time and trust each other. The situation is similar to that of community art in Britain as described by Freeman (no date, p.3):

'Quilts were, indeed, often collaborative efforts, with a group of women sitting round a quilting frame jointly stitching the same quilt. This closeness encouraged intimacy. And gradually the gossip would turn to men and babies. There is ample oral testimony to show how all this mingled and combined to create in the women a sense of community and social identity'.

In the arpilleristas' case, intimacy is also a helped by a feeling that they share many of the same problems and therefore know that they will be understood.

The women do not have many other people with whom to air their feelings.

Although their neighbours share many of their problems and would be a likely source of intimacy, they do not have close relationships with them, as a rule. Normally, relationships with neighbours are limited to greetings as one passes them in the street.

The idea exists amongst *pobladoras* that neighbours cannot be trusted to keep their secrets. Moreover, a certain pride keeps them from telling their neighbours the extent of their problems. The attitude of *pobladoras* during the dictatorship was to hide their poverty from their neighbours, even to the extent of not going to the soup kitchen, when the need was acute. Ada and Juana, however, each have one neighbour with whom they are relatively close. Juana's neighbour kept her company during New Year's Eve when her family went to another city and looked after her when she was ill. Ada has a close relationship with a young woman across the street; her neighbour confides in her. Sara, on the other hand, does not have a close relationship with any neighbour.

Husbands are not a source of intimacy because communication with husbands is far from open. Ada, for example, keeps secret from her husband the fact that she is going to a management course. He keeps secret from her how much he earns and where he spends some of his time. She feels that he does not respect her and has complains that he uses 'psychological violence' against her. Juana does not talk openly to her husband. Her way of telling her husband that she felt neglected sexually was by telling us while he was in the room and by saying ironically 'aqui viene mi amante' ('here comes my lover') when he came in. Sara does not appear to talk openly with her husband either; she did not, on one occasion, tell her husband that his watching television late at night bothered her. Moreover, it is unlikely that the husbands themselves communicate openly with their wives when they have a problem. The culture of machismo discourages men from being open with their wives and encourages them to hide their weaknesses and emotions.

Communication between husband and wife is severely limited.

Sisters and brothers do not act as confidants; there is little contact with them. Ada sees her sisters and brothers approximately once a month. Usually, family members are geographically distant, which makes communication difficult. Nor are children a source of intimacy. The members of the Sta. Adriana workshop do not confide in their children although the children do sometimes know things the husbands do not. Ada's children, for example, know that she is taking the management course.

As a result of social isolation and the precluding of potentially intimate relationships, the arpillera workshop is one of the few spaces in which its members communicate on a deep level. Even when there was no work to do, the women met and just sat down to talk. Communication, therefore, is a reason to meet, more than the making of the arpilleras themselves.

The functions of the groups were numerous, therefore: income-earning, denunciation, an escape from isolation, meeting friends, the maintenance of an identity, learning, therapy, women's solidarity, having a voice, and intimacy. Craft-making in other parts of the world has fulfilled some of the same functions. A Manchester adult education project working with 200 women aimed, through textile crafts, to: 'enhance and contribute to the self-esteem of ethnic minority women' with the long-term aim of tackling racism. It also aimed to 'explore venues and facilities for women to come together to express their creativity and learn from each other in a co-operative manner'

(Walk 1994: 1-8). Collective artistic activity accomplishes a good deal besides the making of the art objects.

CONCLUSION

Working-class shantytown women and relatives of the disappeared met to make arpilleras when wider political circumstances (economic crisis and political repression) impinged on their lives. Such circumstances bring into existence institutions aiming to help the victims of the circumstances. One of the ways these institutions try to help is by bringing people together to combat their difficulties in different ways. The beneficiaries are drawn to the institutions initially to assuage their economic circumstances, but soon their motivations become more varied. In the case of the arpilleristas, although the initial incentive was income-earning and denunciation, an escape from isolation, meeting friends, the maintenance of an identity, learning, therapy, women's solidarity, having a voice, and intimacy, are other motivating factors. Poverty and political repression, therefore, ironically fostered collective (and creative) activity in the form of groups coming together to solve their most pressing problems. Such stable forms of interaction gradually resulted in people relaxing and talking fairly openly.

The arpillera groups sprang up in the first years of the Pinochet regime. Creative activity under these conditions was connected with an institution which arranged for the distribution of the art works, and possessed contacts, information and resources. The

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institution had a political stance and controlled, to some extent, the ideas which emerged in the creative process, through training and censorship. Some forms of collective creative activity are less obviously managed or controlled by an institution (e.g. the Macul group of embroiderers). Even in such cases, however, the art-making groups still have links with relatively powerful institutions (e.g. local government) which help with distribution. When political repression is no longer an overpowering fact of life some groups continue to work under the institution. At such times the institutions are less marked in their political orientation, and less interested in controlling the political ideas of those who work within them.

The different arpillera groups have different ethics: solidarity in the case of the Agrupación and Vicaría groups, and professionalism and productivity in the case of the other three. The ethic of these groups is in large part shaped by the institution within which they function. The members of the groups, and the institutions applaud manifestations of the conduct in question and express verbal disapproval of contrary conduct (e.g. Ada of the Santa Adriana group said scornfully that the Villa Sur group always talked about solidarity but never practised it). In this way, the rules of conduct become an identifier of membership within a group or a network of groups (such as the network of arpilleristas working with the Vicaría).

In the Vicaría's case, solidarity was like a web, binding the arpilleristas to the sympathisers abroad, in an international network of resistance. This ethic linked the groups by providing the framework for either direct personal contact, or a flow of

resources or symbols (e.g. the arpilleras) between the units in the web. The ethic also served as an identifier of membership in one larger group (e.g. the 'second Chile' or people who resisted Pinochet). Solidarity for the 'second Chile' was a creator of community, a revolutionary force, and the hallmark of a body of people whose ideal was a different sort of Chile from that proposed by Pinochet. The ethic is not interpreted in exactly the same way by all the individuals in the network, but there is a common understanding of what it involves (helping the less fortunate, for example). The arpilleras are signifiers of the ethic; they are also the material manifestation of behaviours derived from belief in the ethic.

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CHAPTER 4: THE DISTRIBUTION OF ARPILLERAS

The arpillera trade and its change over time are the subject of this chapter. The Vicaría organised a system of relations, which enabled it to sell arpilleras at home and abroad. There were two versions of this system or 'arpillera trade', one succeeding the other chronologically. The first was a more politicised version of the trade, lasting from the mid-Seventies to the mid-Eighties; the second was a more commercial version. The purpose of the politicised phase of the trade was to inform people in the First World about the political repression and economic crisis in Chile. Educated North Americans and Europeans, and Chileans, who might sympathise, were the main targets of this 'information campaign'. As well as just informing, the purpose of 'telling the tale' was to persuade these audiences that something had to be done for those who were suffering. The people abroad had the opportunity to help in a material way by buying the very documents that informed them. In doing so, they were simultaneously becoming aware of the situation in Chile, receiving and material token of their generous gesture which they could exhibit in their homes, and gaining the opportunity to express solidarity, an ethic dear to them (See Chapter 3). In this way, an artistic and political network was organised as a form of political protest.

With the coming of some form of democracy the political part of the formula became irrelevant, even though there was still considerable poverty, and there were still political prisoners. Political themes could not be sold, because the solidarity-oriented people who bought and sold them no longer saw such themes as appropriate. Many of these people lost interest in Chile with the return to democracy, or (in the case of

Chileans) ceased to buy because they returned home from exile. The new people the Vicaría sold to were interested in buying decorative art works; they were relatively ignorant and uninterested in the Chilean situation. The 'decorative arpillera period' began: the Vicaría turned the business around so that it sold attractive, bucolic arpilleras, and an ethic of professionalism and commercialism replaced that of solidarity. The political circumstances, together with structural changes in the market, therefore, meant that the Vicaría had to change the terms of the business.

The first part of the chapter analyses the systems the Vicaría used for selling the arpilleras during the two stages of the trade: political and decorative. The second part deals briefly with the systems of distribution of the other groups studied. The third part deals with the meaning of the arpillera for the different buyers and for the arpilleristas, showing how the meaning changes according to whom is doing the buying.

THE VICARIA'S POLITICAL ARPILLERA TRADE

The first phase of the arpillera trade (beginning in 1974 and continuing until the late Eighties) was highly politicised. The point of this kind of trade was politics: to tell the world about the atrocities occurring in Chile, and to support the victims of the regime. At the time it was difficult for people both at home and abroad to obtain reliable news about Chile, as the official news painted a rosy picture. The arpilleras were an alternative medium to the existing official ones. In the eyes of Paulina Waugh, a gallery owner who

exhibited arpilleras in Santiago at the height of political repression, the arpilleras conveyed 'underground' information:

Paulina 'Yes, it wasn't a public thing. You could not use any media, neither television,

nor radio, nor newspaper, nothing. But yes there was a sort of internal postal system, and not just in this, no, in everything that happened. If something happened, I don't know, in Chupunco, within the hour, or in two hours, everyone knew. There was a whole network, underground. So any information which could help people at that moment, would immediately be transmitted.

And they [the arpilleristas] would take it and revise it'

Jacqueline It's sort

It's sort of, sort of like an alternative press.

Paulina

Totally. Completely. An alternative press, yes.

For those who wanted the information, the arpillera was a form of newspaper. The arpilleras, therefore, were the vehicle of information for a web of people who needed the information they carried so as to resist the regime or help those who did.

In part so as to fulfil this need, the arpilleras showed scenes of economic deprivation and political repression:

Jacqueline And what were the subjects when you started in the workshop, I mean, the

themes.

Woman 1 They were denunciatory themes. We were international pamphleteers. Funeral

wakes - they were themes of denunciation. We did electricity cuts, we did the

funeral wakes, the marches...

Jacqueline What is a 'velatorio' [funeral wake]?

Woman 1 You put out candles in remembrance of people who were killed

Woman 2 They killed people here too.

(Villa Sur group)

¹There were other channels of unofficial news: personal testimony by exiles, testimonial literature, and, within Chile, clandestine radio stations and newspapers, often very crudely produced.

The arpilleristas, themselves, were keen to denounce. As Doris states: 'And that was my aim in making arpilleras. To denounce. And they are strong ones'. One of the main functions of the arpillera, therefore, was to spread news about events in Chile. ²

A second important function of the politicised phase of the arpillera trade was to bring material resources to the Vicaría and the victims it helped. The arpillera was a way of showing that people were suffering and something had to be done, and that 'You' could help in a material way by buying arpilleras. The arpillera, then, was a token of exchange for resources sent to Chile.

For the Vicaría's system to work, it needed people who were willing to express solidarity. Solidarity has several meanings (see Chapter 3) but in the context of buying arpilleras, it is the expression of sympathy for, and ideological agreement with, the sufferers, as well as the giving of support in a material form. Solidarity-oriented people existed, in great numbers; they were exiled Chileans, European and North American sympathisers, and members of resistance groups within Chile. They bought arpilleras from the Vicaría and re-sold them to individual end-buyers, sending most of the money back to the Vicaría. They bought in part to receive information about Chile, but essentially to help the Vicaría and the arpilleristas, economically and ideologically (by showing sympathy for the cause).

² From the start, therefore, the arpillera trade had an international orientation. Its audience did not progress from local to national to international, as is the case with the distribution systems of many art forms (Becker 1982: 321). Whilst the audience was always international, the production did progress from local to national and international, however, as Becker (1982) suggests. Arpilleras began to be made in other parts of Chile (Valparaiso and Coquimbo, for example) and in Peru, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Colombia.

The solidarity market was very politically aware in general terms. Alba Viotto, selling arpilleras in Geneva, for example, was a member of Amnesty, interested in resistance:

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'I believe in the importance of resistance groups ['contre pouvoirs'], and it's at the grass-roots level that resistance groups have to organise. I believe in popular organisations, from my experience in Chile and other countries, I find that they are fundamental in making things happen, and within that I am particularly sensitive to women' (Interview with Alba Viotto)

Usually, such individuals were particularly sensitive to 'human rights', over and above the problems of poverty and class. The Chileans who bought arpilleras abroad were, of course, particularly interested Chile and more likely to focus on helping the victims of the repression as well as of the economic crisis.

Most of these buyers or institutions were not aiming to make a large profit for themselves; their ethic was that of solidarity rather than professionalism or competitiveness. Andy sold arpilleras for the Chile Committee for Human Rights:

'TUMI, the [crafts shop] shop in London, you know TUMI, it's in Bristol as well, they were selling them for twenty-five pounds when we were selling them for twelve. But TUMI was really into the profit... You have to get a certain number of sales before you can reinvest in more patchworks. So any profit which, say, we had wasn't substantial, it was generally ploughed back into getting the next patchwork across. So the profit margin would be quite small. But we were certainly going for a profit margin because we were using it as a fund raiser for our human rights activities here, running our actual schemes, campaigns, printing, conferences etc. But it was really peanuts... But because for me what was important wasn't just the solidarity message, it was the fact that the Vicaría needed the turnover. One, cause they needed it for the women and two because it meant there was more promotion which meant more success, more employment... you know... So I was very much into the turnover. I would rather sell five at twelve pounds than 2 at 25. And so I tried to keep the price low'.

TUMI, a chain of Latin American commercial craft shops in England, was one of the few distribution outlets interested in the arpilleras' commercial value. Solidarity buyers did not shun making a profit, however. When profits were made they usually either sent them

to the Vicaría or invested them in other projects which were also 'solidarity oriented'. For example, the Chile Committee for Human Rights invested the small profit it made by selling arpilleras, into its own projects which helped Chileans in England and those who were marginalised or persecuted in Chile. A small number of buyers kept the profits for themselves. Some hard-up exiles used them partly for their own survival, and others used them partly to supplement their own income. Andy, for example, sold arpilleras independently of the Committee, for his own financial gain. In the most cases, however, a small profit was made and used to support solidarity causes; the commercial and solidarity ethics were intertwined.

The Vicaría was well aware of the solidarity orientation of the trade, using the term *mercado solidario* ('solidarity market') it. It did not see its network of buyers as clients in the ordinary commercial sense; rather, it saw them as 'friends' who wanted to 'help'. Winnie Lira describes: 'we sent [the arpilleras] to all our friends in the world. To churches, to groups of exiles, to whoever would help us. In the case of arpilleras, to buy is to perform a gesture of aid and solidarity.' She lists those who collaborated with the selling of arpilleras as being: the Fundación Missio (which also sold its own arpilleras), and a number of individuals, ambassadors, monks, and nuns.

Intermediary buyers abroad were equally aware of the solidarity interests of their buyers. Andy, buying for the Chile Committee for Human Rights stated:

^{&#}x27;And they were sold for solidarity. I mean, women who'd lost the breadwinner, they weren't used to working themselves and there still wasn't enough money if they had been working, and so they would sell these off. And some of these would get solidarity sales, people around the country would like to help you... There was a problem here [at the end of the dictatorship], which was that the solidarity market was diminishing'.

(Interview with Andy McEntee)

The fact that Andy's vocabulary contains the term 'solidarity sales' suggests that solidarity was the ideology behind both people's buying and his selling.

The arpilleristas were themselves aware of the fact that people abroad were expressing solidarity towards them. Several arpilleras have as their theme 'international solidarity'. The arpilleras, then, operated in a market with a different logic from that of most crafts or even Third World products. Rather than commercial values and professionalism, it was solidarity which was the dominant ethic of the system of distribution of arpilleras.

In the first, politicised period, therefore, the point of the arpillera trade was to spread news about Chile, and to bring resources to the Vicaría and victims of the regime in Chile. The Vicaría trained the women to turn out denunciatory arpilleras for this purpose (see Chapter 5). Intermediary and end buyers learnt about the events in Chile, helped in a material way, and expressed solidarity by buying the arpilleras. This network, from arpilleristas to end-buyers, together made up a fabric of people who shared an ideal for Chile which differed dramatically from Pinochet's Chile; they were citizens of a 'second Chile'.

Sales Abroad

Intermediary Buyers

The Vicaría sold its arpilleras in Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Holland, England, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, Australia, Canada and the US³, as well as Chile. It sold to 'intermediary buyers' who, in turn, sold to 'end buyers'. One of the earliest intermediary buyers abroad was the small organisation set up by Chileans to help the Chilean refugee community, as well as victims of the regime at home. Such organisations supported the Vicaría and resistance groups, provided a haven and services for newly arrived Chileans, and gave out information about the situation in Chile. Often they were partially funded by agencies and foundations and staffed mostly by Chileans. Examples include Chile Democrático and the Chile Committee for Human Rights in London, which bought large quantities of arpilleras and photographed arpilleras to make cards, post cards, and calendars, which they also sold. Typically they sold directly out of their offices, at solidarity events, speakers' events, and via exhibitions in libraries and schools.

Chilean individuals (often exiles or people who had fled Chile for fear of death) were another category of intermediary buyer. They had the arpilleras sent to their homes and sold them to acquaintances and people at solidarity or Chilean events, sending (for the most part) the earnings back to the Vicaría (which had helped many of them escape).

³ The buyers are: Kinderhilfe Chile, Pro Menores, CEPA, IICCS, TENEUX, Goppingen Weltladle, Ingeborg Bruns, and Cecilia Aiple in Germany; Irma Prado in Belgium; Maria Cecilia Castro in Denmark; L'Alegrije in Spain; Solidar'Monde Fam-Import, Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Developpement and Terre des Hommes in France; S.O.S. Wereldhandel and Juan Soto Leyton in Holland; Oxfam Trading and Traidcraft and Andy McEntee in England, Cooperazione Terzo Mondo and Cooperative Oltremare in Italy; OIKOS in Portugal; SACKEUS in Sweden, Magasins du Monde, Fairness Shop-Caritas, Danisa Bagnoud, Heidy Berger and Alba Viotto in Switzerland; Sumalao Latino in Japan; DEVTRDE in Australia; Las Tres Marías, Global Village, Crossroads, Beyond the Andes, Guatemala Shop, Hand to Hand Folk Art and Rosalie Armstrong in Canada, Third World Handarts, the Center for

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Patricio, for example, was a priest who had fled Chile with the help of the Vicaría. He sold arpilleras at craft markets, church events, and solidarity fairs in France. Bernardita's father escaped from Chile with the Vicaría's help and sold arpilleras in Holland. Isabel Morel, Orlando Letelier's wife, was an exile in the US after her husband was murdered, and exhibited and sold arpilleras at the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington DC, and on several American university campuses⁴.

Numerous non-Chileans were also intermediary buyers of arpilleras. These include European and North American human rights activists, academics interested in Chile, and people who supported the cause. They usually kept a few arpilleras for themselves but tried to sell as many as possible. Alba Viotto, a nurse and member of Amnesty International in Geneva, for example, sold thousands of arpilleras to friends, and at solidarity events. Andy bought arpilleras to sell privately (as well as through the Chilean Committee for Human Rights) at solidarity events, craft markets, through a friend's shop, and via catalogue to Amnesty members. Academics who bought arpilleras kept some for their personal collections, showed them in class and sold a number on campus. Marjorie Agosin of Wellesley College, for example, was and continues to be an important buyer of arpilleras.

NGOs dealing with Third World development were also buyers of arpilleras.

Many such NGOs, as well as running projects in developing countries, sold (and continue to sell) Third World products in their own shops. They do not aim for high profit margins

Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame, Mission Traders, One People, Dos Manos, Self Help Handarts and 40 individuals in the US. .

and give a more substantial part of their income to the producers of the goods, as compared with purely commercial enterprises. Examples of such NGO shops include Oxfam Trading (the commercial unit of Oxfam) in England, Terre des Hommes in France, and Cooperazione Terzo Mondo in Italy.

Other intermediary buyers were the 'fair trade' shops selling Third World products with a guiding principle of avoiding exploitational relations. They return a large share of the profits to the producers. Magasins du Monde with 60 shops throughout Switzerland is one such buyer of arpilleras (as well as of food and other crafts from a wide range of other countries). The arpillera became one of the shop's products when a Chilean exile in a small town in the Alps began to work for them as a volunteer and wrote a convincing proposal for the arpilleras. Often these shops have rigid selection criteria for choosing which Third World producers to buy from (e.g. the economic standing of members of the group, capacity for self-management, etc.).

There were numerous other buyers of arpilleras. International human rights organisations such as Amnesty International sold the arpilleras mainly through their Christmas catalogue, whilst at the same time drawing the international public's attention to the situation in Chile. Craft and gift shops were active in selling arpilleras. One such shop in London was run by a member of Amnesty International who had a particular interest in helping Third World craftswomen. Charities, often connected with a Church, often sold arpilleras. Cafod, the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development in Britain, sold arpillera cards, whilst the Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development in

⁴ The exhibition travelled the country and was hired by educational institutions. Some of her arpilleras were

France sold arpilleras, for example. Latin American research and cultural centres, such as the Latin America Centre in London, were also buyers. The range of buyers was large during the politicised period.

Most intermediary buyers had the arpilleras sent to them from Chile, by air, directly from the Vicaría. There are exceptions; Isabel Morel, for example, bought directly from the Agrupación women. The buyers typically wrote a letter to the Vicaría requesting a certain number of arpilleras. Some developed a coded language:

'Those with a political content... which was scenes of people demonstrating in the streets, people being beat up by the police... people standing with a banner saying 'Dónde Están ?' - it was the relatives of the disappeared. And sometimes it would have a name. Now, those ones were certainly risky in Chile so we would- if we asked for them, say in the letter we would ask for the coloured ones. It was understood they were - that's what they were.'
(Interview with Andy McEntee)

The amount they requested depended on the weight:

'They had to send them out in batches of six as well. The reason we picked six was because-five or six- it was, it was 2 kilos... and two kilos you could do parcel post, it had to go through customs, so it could be checked on the way out, but if we put one, max two, it was a six pack, orit might have been six was a kilo- sometimes we'd get an order for twelve, in which case we'd stick in maybe two of the political ones and they were generally all right. If they went beyond parcel post, you know it was a big package, they had to be opened by customs in Chile and that was dangerous. So when it came to- they would rather stick with ten small packets, rather than one big packet, then she would need to sort of camouflage this kind of colour, the political ones.' (Interview with Andy McEntee)

If they needed the arpilleras urgently, the buyers would phone the Vicaría. The Vicaría and buyers co-operated, therefore, to develop a system which made the distribution of arpilleras as safe as possible.

also exhibited permanently in the IPS in Washington DC.

End Buyers

These intermediaries sold to individual end buyers: members of the Chilean community abroad and non-Chileans who were interested in human rights or wanted to express solidarity for the victims of the Chilean regime. Those buyers who were members of the Chilean community usually came into contact with the arpilleras at Chilean community events (such as the celebration of the national day), and solidarity events, where the intermediary buyers had stalls. They also saw arpilleras when they visited organisations such as Chile Democrático.

The non-Chilean end buyers usually knew a little about the arpilleras because an acquaintance had mentioned them. However, sometimes they knew nothing about the arpilleras until they saw some at a stall at a solidarity event (Andy McEntee). They might be attracted by the visual appearance of the arpilleras and would only become interested in the issues behind the arpillera when the salesperson started talking to them. Several intermediary buyers gave customers a photocopied page of information about the arpillera. Magasins du Monde has such a page next to the arpilleras on the shelf and Andy had one at his stalls.

These non-Chilean buyers were mostly politically aware, left-wing individuals who shopped in Third World NGOs and markets and had a 'social conscience': they knew that their buying would help people who were economically deprived. They frequently chose the arpilleras as presents, but also bought for themselves or for their families. Some of the buyers (in the case of Magasins du Monde) bought because they

had come to the shop to buy food which the shop sells and happened to notice the arpillera whilst they were looking at the food. In some cases the end buyers were friends and acquaintances of the intermediary buyers.

Schools and libraries were also end buyers of sorts, renting out sets of arpilleras.

Isabel Morel, for example, rented the arpilleras to universities in the US and Andy rented them out to libraries and schools in England.

Thanks to the international distribution system of the Vicaría, therefore, the arpilleras reached markets for cultural goods on other continents. The arpillera case adds a dimension to Canclini's (1988) assertion that the popular is defined by the unequal access of the subaltern classes to the market for symbolic goods. Where a powerful institution (such as the Church) acts as intermediary, access to the market, for subaltern groups, is facilitated.

Sending the arpillera out of the country

The Vicaría developed a sophisticated system for getting the arpilleras out of Chile. This system involved a series of steps, from quality control in the arpillera workshops themselves, to putting the arpilleras on a plane. Once the arpilleras had passed through customs, they were safely on their way to Europe, Canada or the US. To carry out these steps the Vicaría recruited a network of people who sympathised with the cause and who were willing, at great personal risk, to pass the arpilleras on to the next link in

the chain. The act of exporting arpilleras was an act of resistance and therefore required that the people in the chain work in a clandestine fashion.

When the arpilleras had undergone a quality control within the *coordinadoras* (see Chapter 3) the leader of the *coordinadora* (or group, in the Agrupación's case) took them to the central Vicaría office. This was an extremely perilous process as they could be held up by soldiers on the bus (buses were sometimes stopped at random) or in the street. Often they carried the arpilleras under their skirts so as to hide them, or in their bags. The following describes the arpilleristas' journey, not to the Vicaría but to an art gallery not far away (the dangers were the same):

'I had to transport them, I was the person responsible for sales. So we always went with Alicia with the packets in the thick of the dictatorship-76- crossing Alameda towards the Parque Forestal, to the other side of the Mapocho⁵. There was a woman called Paulina who had a shop, an art shop, and she sold and exported arpilleras. They bombed her place. We had to sell the arpillera when there were no sales abroad. With packets of fifty under each arm. We were so poor that we didn't have paper. And I go past Diego Portales and the arpilleras start to come undone. Those types [soldiers] didn't notice.⁶ (Interview with Violeta Morales)

Once the arpilleristas reached the Vicaría, Winnie or an employee examined them, paid the arpillerista, and told her what corrections to make on rejected ones.

When the arpilleristas left, the Vicaría employees began to pack them, using boxes of OMO soap powder and giving a false sender address:

'We would receive the orders, made up the packet, and send it. I was in charge of that, all the business with abroad, and as I speak English, French and German, I was a useful person there, really, for doing that. What I always remember about the arpilleras, what we needed were boxes

⁵ The Alameda is the main street running East-West through Santiago, the Parque Forestal is a park in the centre, and the Mapocho is the river.

⁶ Diego Portales was the seat of the Pinochet government and 'the types' were the soldiers outside it.

like this, of OMO, which were in the supermarkets, so I was always looking out for boxes of OMO. In an OMO box you could fit exactly 100 arpilleras. And then, we would make the packet, send it, and two or three times we had serious problems because the regime knew that these things were coming out of the Vicaría. But they never had proof, because I put- what's the word- a fake sender address. And to tell you the truth I did not feel very good about doing that, because we knew were being watched constantly'. (Interview with Riet Delsing)

The next link in the chain was the manager of a tourist agency. The link after that was someone at the airport:

'We had a contact through a travel agent, where there was someone who could be trusted, and that person had another contact in the airport, so it was a whole network of solidarity if you like, so as to get these products out of the country.'
(Interview with Riet Delsing)

The solidarity chain was very risky for all involved:

'But sometimes people made mistakes abroad- I remember once that they sent a telegram and that telegram was intercepted and so they knew that this had come out of the Vicaría. And they started to follow us. Once people from DINA came, you already knew which they were. When I left the Vicaría there were two people following me, and I arrived at the friend from the travel agent's, and she had also realised that there were people outside and we had do go through a whole procedure: like go running down the streets so that they could not connect me with the person inside, things like that'.

(Interview with Riet Delsing)

The chain, therefore, was made up of people who were known and trusted, and who were willing to work in a clandestine fashion, at great personal risk.

Sales within Chile

During the politicised trade period the Vicaría sold a small number of arpilleras at its offices next to the cathedral in the Plaza de Armas, in the centre of Santiago. As Winnie Lira describes:

'And we also had a shop inside the Vicaría, where we would sell. And although it did not face the street, obviously- this was impossible, we had it very much inside, many tourists came, a lot of foreigners, to visit us and they would buy the arpilleras'.

Within the main Vicaría offices, only the more innocuous ones were on display. However, as the British academic Catherine Boyle (personal conversation, January 1995) reported, the Vicaría had more strongly politicised arpilleras under the counter. When a customer arrived, the Vicaría employees first took out the 'innocent' ones and only if asked specifically for the more political ones, did they display these. They were afraid that the buyers might be agents of the DINA. The people who bought arpilleras from the Vicaría's offices were mostly tourists or academics who had heard about them.

Locals also bought. A document entitled 'Who gave their support?' published by the Fundación Solidaridad states:

'Many of them [the buyers in Chile itself] came [to the shop] especially, from all areas of Santiago, because they appreciate the work of small producers and the working-class economy of solidarity⁷. Others came in because they saw an interesting shop window with beautiful handicrafts. Once in the shop, we explained where the work came from and they left happy with their purchase and with the fact of having helped'.

Members of the resistance community and Vicaría also bought:

I think we were the first consumers. I think that all the Vicaria personnel, and the whole sector of people who were into solidarity, resistance, who were of the middle class... we all had work and the capacity to buy; we were perhaps the first to stock up with arpilleras.

(Ana Maria Medioli)

Solidarity, therefore, also operated amongst buyers at home.

The Vicaría area office in the neighbourhood of Nuñoa in the Eastern part of Santiago also sold arpilleras although what they had could not be described as a shop but rather a space within their offices.

THE DECORATIVE TRADE PERIOD

Sales abroad

The system which the Vicaría had built up to export the arpilleras, began to change in the late Eighties. The change accelerating when a form of democracy returned in 1990. The late Eighties were a time of lessened repression, and the return of some exiles. This 'opening up', and the return to democracy especially, made the political part of the formula irrelevant, even though there were still poverty, exiles and political prisoners.

For foreign buyers, the political and highly denunciatory arpilleras were no longer appropriate. Winnie states: 'it became very difficult to sell arpilleras showing disappearances' (Interview, 12th July 1995). Europeans and North Americans perceived Chile as no longer having a human rights problem. In the mid-Nineties Chile became known for its 'economic boom', resulting in Amnesty, NGOs, Third World shops and human rights activists ceasing to consider Chilean products a priority, and believing that

⁷ The 'economy of solidarity' is a term coined by Luis Razeto to describe the network of workshops and buyers who bought to help the producers, in the years of the Pinochet regime.

the products of other groups were more deserving of their solidarity. The attention of Europeans and Americans switched to Yugoslavia and countries with emergencies:

'At present I am less focused on Chile because the way the world is, it means that at some point you also have to be attentive to the voices of others, and sometimes it's difficult, the choices are painful... there is also the phenomenon of a surplus of requests for help. In the sense that there are lots of tragedies in the world and people here are called on to help for Africa, Chiapas, Yugoslavia...' (Interview with Alba Viotto)

The solidarity market was volatile; its members had many causes and their attention and help could shift suddenly. The distribution network based on solidarity, therefore, began to disintegrate.

There were other structural causes for the new difficulty with selling arpilleras. Many of the Chilean refugees abroad, a substantial part of the market for arpilleras, began to return to Chile in the late Eighties and continued to do so in the Nineties, no longer buying or promoting the sale of arpilleras. The organisations which supported these Chileans and sold arpilleras began to close down or reduce their range of activities. Some foreign buyers lost track of the Vicaría with its new address and name (Fundación). Some stopped buying because they thought the quality of the arpilleras was dropping. Andy, for example, saw the quality as dropping because the Fundación aimed for a high turnover. Finally, the Peruvian arpillera came on the market, providing severe competition for the Chilean arpilleras because its price was much lower. Oxfam Trading UK, for example, switched to Peruvian arpilleras. All these changes resulted in a severe reduction in the range of buyers. Those that remained were Third World shops, charities and craft shops. Magasins du Monde in Switzerland, for example, sold and continues to sell arpilleras. Such shops found that turnover was low and many stopped selling arpilleras.

Because of the perception of changed political and economic circumstances in Chile and because of structural changes in the market, the Vicaría could no longer continue to sell as it had done. It was faced with a choice: either to adapt to the change, or give up the business. In 1991, when the Vicaría was dismantled (see Chapter 3) and the *Programa de Talleres* continued to function under the name of *Fundación Solidaridad*, the staff becoming dependent on the sale of arpilleras and other crafts for their income. Partly for this reason, and partly to continue to help the women (who now knew how to make arpilleras and expected the Vicaría to keep buying as it had always done), the Fundación accepted the new terms of the trade:

Jacqueline And why did the demand drop?

Violeta Because abroad, as time went on, they thought that Chile's problems had been

solved.

Jacqueline So did it drop at the end of the Eighties or earlier?

Violeta More or less in the Eighties, it started to go down, because rumours that things

were changing here, began to go around... but then they [the Vicaría] reduced the number of its orders, because our arpilleras were strong denunciations. They didn't want machine guns... I mean, the Vicaría behaved very well with the Agrupación. But not with the workshop, because they didn't want machine guns, they didn't want arpilleras with blood in them, they didn't want this, they didn't want that... because, according to them, the gringos did not like such

topics.

The Fundación, as it was now called, changed the way the business was done. It began to order only bucolic arpilleras, refusing those with a political subject matter, so as to please potential buyers less interested in Chilean politics. These new arpilleras showed scenes of markets, bread ovens and fruit picking (see Chapter 5). This change in the arpillera is not unlike that in the 'retablos' [wooden triptychs with tiny sculpted figures] of Ayacucho,

Peru, which evolved from depicting religious to secular customs, so as to be pleasing to foreign buyers (Rowe and Schelling 1991).

The Vicaría began to function like a profit-oriented craft company, with more aggressive marketing techniques. Its new ethic was one of professionalism and commercialism rather than solidarity. In its desperation to sell, according to Andy, it sold arpilleras which, in some cases, were of lesser quality than the earlier ones. It diversified, producing different types of arpillera object (such as aprons, cards and bags), and arpilleras in different sizes. Winnie Lira began to make trips to Europe to meet potential buyers and promote the arpillera.

The Vicaría's new commercial orientation was reflected in the fact that it turned out a catalogue in the late Eighties. The catalogue had a glossy cover, coloured photographs of products and models, and bilingual descriptions of all the products. The models in the catalogue are not blond but seem rather to be ordinary, black-haired and olive-complexioned Chilean children and women. The cover shows the door of Talleres and the back a thin woman making an arpillera, the figures on the table in front of her and her baby on her lap.

The whole distribution network, and not just the Vicaría, changed. The intermediary buyers became more aggressive and expert in their selling techniques.

Andy, for example, placed an ad for arpilleras in the Amnesty International newsletter, undercutting the price at which Amnesty itself was offering arpilleras. At market stalls he

sorted the arpilleras by theme (Christmas scenes, children, markets etc.) so as to target customers' needs more directly.

The end buyers of this period were, in general, not knowledgeable or interested in the political and economic situation in Chile. Rather, they were attracted by the visual appearance of the arpilleras. A number of Magasins du Monde buyers of arpilleras were parents of visually impaired children, rather than people interested in Chile, for example (interview with Bernadette Oriet, Magasins du Monde manager). Solidarity was not totally lost from the equation, however. Once the arpillera had caught the buyers' eye, they were motivated in part to buy it in part by the fact that they knew they would be helping people in need. As the manager of a craft shop selling arpilleras in London described:

'I've got customers who want something ethical as a present for their friends or relatives rather than something mass produced... Mostly people who like the idea of other countries being helped or if the environment has been exploited, that's probably the idea behind the shop as much as possible ... Most of my customers are students, artists, probably a few teachers ... mothers..., Probably very middle class, sadly to say... the posh people don't really like it here and the poor people can't really afford the things....' (Barbara)

Usually such buyers have a 'social conscience' and typically shop in markets or Third World shops, like some of the buyers of the previous period. However, they are not expressing solidarity for the Chilean cause, as were the people in the previous period. Instead, it was general solidarity directed towards helping anyone in need.

Despite the changes in the distribution system, the Vicaría was not wholly successful in securing dependable and voluminous demand from foreign markets. Becker

(1982) states that only changes that succeed in capturing existing co-operative networks or developing new ones, survive. The arpillera has survived, but only just. The Vicaría has not been very successful in engaging the co-operation of new distributors, in part because, instead of trying new sorts of outlets (e.g. interior design shops, toy shops or department stores), it has continued to try to sell via some the old ones (e.g. Third World shops). In 1995 a mood of fatalism characterised the Vicaría employees, who blamed their poor sales on the fact that Chile was no longer perceived by foreign clients as a problem area, and that Chileans would never appreciate such work. This was not, in fact, true⁸. By 1992 and throughout the mid-Nineties, the number of arpilleristas was dwindling rapidly because the Vicaría could no longer support them, and the women found jobs elsewhere or returned to being full-time housewives. The approximate number of arpilleristas who still sold to the Vicaría in 1995, was only 200.

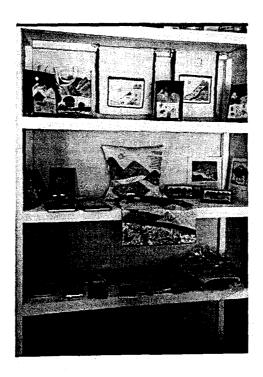
Sales Inside Chile

When the Vicaría was dismantled, Talleres moved, and sold arpilleras in its shop (the front part of its offices) on a busy street near the National Art Museum and the Sta. Lucía park. The shop measures approximately 10m by 7m and houses a wide variety of handicrafts (including copper work, wooden objects, and dolls). The shop window displays a number of the products contained inside.

⁸Members of the Chilean upper class were most impressed by and interested in the arpilleras I showed them.



The Fundación shop



Typical display of arpilleras in a craft shop interior

The arpilleras are piled up on shelves at the sides of the shop and hang on the back wall; they are not prominently displayed. The catalogue is on display and for sale in the shop. Despite its location, the shop does not attract many customers because it is a couple of metres back from the pavement and somewhat dark. Most customers are tourists or passers-by. Most are not interested in the specifics of Chilean politics and economics and therefore do not especially seek out political arpilleras.⁹

The Vicaría, therefore, set up a system of relations which enabled it to sell arpilleras abroad. The system changed towards the end of the Pinochet regime, from a politicised form of the trade to a decorative form, and was partially successful. It was not the only way the arpillera groups sold arpilleras, however.

SHANTYTOWN WOMEN'S SELLING WITHOUT THE VICARIA

The Vicaría was by far the main buyer of arpilleras for the shantytown women whose groups it had set up. However, the groups did find other distribution outlets, especially when the Vicaría gave them fewer orders. What they themselves organised was not a systematic, year-round distribution system, but rather sporadic sales when the opportunity arose. They could not export independently because they lacked the contacts and know-how.

Every year since the end of the dictatorship a number of groups have rented a stall at the 'FESOL' fair in Bellavista, a tourist spot in central Santiago. A wide variety of Chilean artisans participate in this fair which lasts several days and attracts mainly tourists. The *coordinadoras* of both the Eastern and Southern areas of Santiago (of which the Sta. Adriana group was a member- see Chapter 3) rent a stall, and the leaders of the arpillera groups take it in turns to staff it. All the arpilleristas wear a uniform consisting of a white blouse, black skirt and appliquéd waistcoat.

The Sta. Adriana group was relatively unsuccessful at selling through alternative sales outlets. It sold a number of arpilleras to Julie, an Australian friend of mine who was hoping to set up a distribution system through her sister's church in Australia, but Julie's orders ceased after a few months. It tried to sell a number via the Casa de la Mujer (an institution which provided training for women) where Ada took a course in microentrepreneurship in April, but this attempt was unsuccessful. The group met with two artisans whom I had interviewed, in the Cerro Sta. Lucía crafts market, and discussed selling there, but the group rejected their offer on the grounds that it was exploitational, as the stall owners would sell at double the price they bought for.

THE AGRUPACIÓN

⁹ The shop did not have any of the Agrupación's arpilleras for sale although it did have some in a box to show to customers from outside Chile who specifically asked to see them.

¹⁰ FESOL is short for 'Feria Solidaria'.

The Agrupación group sold most of its work to the Vicaría, until the members received the *reparación* in 1992. However, because of the character of the Agrupación as an institution, the women had other distribution channels open to them. The particularly violent nature of the repression which affected Agrupación members attracted foreign academics and students to it, and to its group of arpilleristas, more than to any other group. Two academics in the US, for example, ordered and continue to order many arpilleras from this group, by-passing the Vicaría to do so. They visited the group personally, and since the disintegration of the group, buy from Anita and Violeta individually. This type of client does not mind the harshness of the denunciation in these arpilleras; it had learnt to appreciate it, even ordering violent and denunciatory arpilleras, and thus resembles the evolving audience described by Becker (1982: 305). The Agrupación's customers often specify the themes they want, in keeping with the sorts of themes the women make.

Furthermore, the arpilleristas of the Agrupación occasionally exhibit. A number of them exhibited and sold in a fair at a large exhibition hall (Mapocho station) in 1995, for example.

PRISMA DE LOS ANDES

The distribution system of the arpilleras of the Místicas and Peñiwén groups is different from that of the Vicaría. Because Prisma is primarily a Christian-oriented

training institution (and not, like the Vicaría, a political institution) it has a distribution network which is not political so much as commercial and Christian in its orientation. It sells mainly to churches and Christian NGOs, particularly in Germany. Many of these outlets came about through the personal contacts of the German nun who had founded the Fundación Missio (of which Prisma used to be a part). Prisma's commercial orientation also enabled it to envisage, at the time of my stay, breaking into the interior decoration and department store market abroad.

Prisma's sales within Chile also reflect its commercial orientation; its outlets are purely commercial (and not hold any political connotations). It sells its stoles in two fancy craft boutiques located in a mall and an up-market craft market, and has a shop attached to its offices, to which it takes visitors after they had been shown around. Prisma also contains a small exhibition hall which displays the arpilleras of numerous groups, some of which are bought occasionally. Visitors to Prisma often buy through personalised order. The Peñiwén group, for example, frequently receives personalised orders from European tourists.

Prisma's non-political nature allows it to sell at events organised by the wives of diplomats in Santiago. It sells occasionally at a coffee morning attended by French-speaking wives of diplomats and businessmen, and at an annual diplomatic women's Christmas fair.

Prisma's approach to marketing is more professional than that of the Vicaría.

When I arrived, Prisma had recently hired a young French woman with marketing

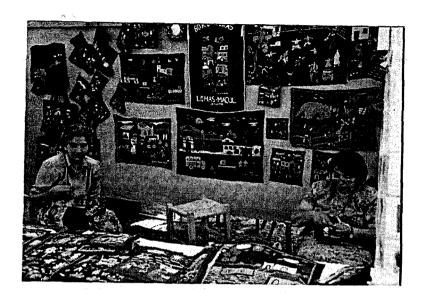
experience in the pharmaceutical industry, to make a catalogue. Prisma also hired a young Canadian woman as a volunteer to write a public relations document in English about the institution.

Prisma, like the Vicaría, has procedures for sending the arpilleras out of the country. When the works of the different groups pass the quality control they are packed and shipped out by plane to the buyer. Often everything is done late, the women work under pressure and there is an atmosphere of crisis in Prisma; sometimes they work around the clock to get an order out. The products are then packed and taken to the airport in the standard fashion of any company exporting products.

THE MACUL EMBROIDERY GROUP

The distribution system of the Macul group reflects the group's independence from any organising institution.

The embroidery group from which Lomas de Macul emerged sold its work in handicraft fairs. Now that the group is independent, it still uses the fair as its primary means of distribution. It makes most of its money by selling at the Artisans' Fair organised by the Catholic University of Chile. The fair takes place in December of every year and the participants are artisans from Chile and other Latin American countries, selected by a professor of folk art at the University.



Selling embroideries at the Artisans' Fair

In 1995 the fair took place in an open exhibition area in Las Condes, a wealthy neighbourhood in Santiago. It lasts approximately five days, from morning till dusk. The women in the group have a stall which they staff in twos, exhibiting almost all their stock. The group also sells at a fair in the grounds of the Museum of National History in downtown Santiago, and at an artisans' fair in Paraguay.

The group has other distribution outlets, to which it has gained access through personal contacts. Because several of the members are connected with the Mothers' Centres of Macul, the group was able to exhibit and sell in the Mothers' Centre building when it was officially inaugurated. Because of its amiable relationship with the mayor and "manager of culture" of the Municipality, the group participated and sold in several exhibitions which the Municipality organised or helped to organise, in different locations,

including the Chilean embassy in New York, the Municipal building of Macul, a museum in the centre of Santiago, and the Ministry of Education.

Because the group lacked the financial resources of a larger institution, it did not own a shop and sold from Catalina's house (she kept the work in a trunk in the back room). This selling was to individuals who had heard about the group or had seen its work. The group had been interviewed by journalists a number of times and some people wanted to buy after reading the articles. Many of its customers were also local businesses who wanted Christmas cards created within Macul. The group also left work on consignment in the craft shop of the Sheraton Hotel in Santiago. It began to think about selling in craft shops when I gave it the cards of several shops, but were unsuccessful. On one occasion it sold at the United Nations newsagents shop.

The distribution system of the Macul group, therefore, reflected its professional orientation, ability to draw on local resources such as the municipality and personal contacts, and independence.

THE MEANING OF THE ARPILLERAS

The Vicaría's Arpilleras

The meaning of an artwork changes according to who is 'consuming' it. Clifford (1988: 223) identifies a system whereby objects move between four 'semantic zones' (or

categories): authentic masterpieces, authentic artefacts, inauthentic masterpieces and inauthentic artefacts. In the Nineteenth Century, for example, pre-Colombian objects were grotesqueries or antiquities, but by 1920 they were aesthetic masterpieces. Whereas the 'moves' Clifford describes are convincing, he does not explore who positions works in certain categories, or examine in depth the fact that a work might simultaneously be in different categories for different people. Similarly, Stromberg-Pelizzi (1993: 87) notes of Mexican crafts: 'Expanding beyond the prior association of some genres with the souvenir, ethnic, curio type of marketing, they have penetrated a wider and more sophisticated market, as well as appearing in museums and art galleries, and in some cases even being exhibited as "contemporary art". The arpillera case illustrates how art works hold different meanings for different people simultaneously, and also acquire different meanings over time. What viewers saw in the arpillera, and what they saw the arpillera as, was largely a function of their approach to art, the women who made them, and the intermediary institution.

The arpilleristas viewed their arpilleras as denunciatory and information giving. They saw them as testimonies which crossed frontiers. Violeta, an arpillerista of the Agrupación, states: 'The arpilleras have had the strength to cross borders and break down walls because they are born of truth' (Silva de Muller, no date: 19). They also associate them with pain. As Violeta Morales states: 'As I gaze at each of these pictures [arpilleras] I remember when the cloth became stained with our tears which, without our being able to stop them, we saw run over our cheeks' (Silva de Muller, no date: 19). An arpillera with a jolly or unrelated content seemed grotesque to them, as Violeta's description of an encounter with a Shell representative suggests:

'He [the Shell representative] says "Look, I want to talk to you... We, in the US, want to put out calendars, T-shirts, jars... with an arpillera made by you, with, on it, a Shell petrol pump, and then everything else you normally put in". And I remember that they were offering 50000 pesos for that arpillera... we were not going to accept that the company Shell, come and propose this type of work, because a company should not be able to benefit from the hunger of a nation, with the plan they had of stuffing their pockets, in the whole US, because that was the intention. And in those days they paid 70 pesos for an arpillera... but never in my life have I seen a man so slimy and dressed up ['compuesto'] as that gringo who came to make that type of proposition. There was a lot of hunger but also a good deal of honesty amongst our unemployed companions and also the relatives of the detained and disappeared.

(Violeta Morales)

Similarly, so loaded with connotations of suffering and resistance is the arpillera for the Agrupación arpilleristas, that the women do not call the new bucolic arpilleras of the Vicaría 'arpilleras'. Toya referred to them as 'aplicación en género' or 'cloth appliqué work', saying that 'today they [people] no longer make arpilleras'. For the Agrupación arpilleristas, the arpillera is a political document.

The arpillera is also a part of their history and identity. Toya, for example, sees the arpillera as 'part of the culture of Latin America'. Magdalena sees it as part of her personal identity and family tradition:

Magdalena As for the arpillera, I hope it never dies because it is all linked up [legado],

because my daughters know how to make them.

Jacqueline Sorry, what does linked up mean?

Magdalena That it passes from one person to the other, for example, I know about arpillera-

making, my daughters also know about arpilleras and even my grandson who is five years old is already making me little arpilleras, it's incredible, and he says, all of a sudden, he says 'you are working, mamita, I will help you. And he puts in the mountains, and he puts in the sea- and he is five years old, and he makes little arpilleras, it makes me laugh. But this happens... and I hope it never

arpinoras, it makes me mega- - at ---

dies.

Arpilleras are part of the family identity, binding together the generations. They have acquired a profound emotional value for a number of arpilleristas.

The vast majority of the arpilleristas do not see their work as art, or themselves as artists, as Brett (1978: 49) also found. Andy, who met arpilleristas in Chile, relates:

'I never get any impression from anyone that they felt there was anything artistic in what they were doing. It was either economic, or it was political'

The arpillera world does not, like many art forms (Becker 1982), reach the stage where it needs to convince people that what is being produced is art and deserves the privileges associated with that status.

For the Vicaría the arpillera was a means whereby it could get the story out, help the women, and bring resources to Chile (see above). However, it was also the sign that 'all was not well' in Chile. As Gloria Torres, an ex-Vicaría employee, states: 'During the long years of military government the arpilleras have been a symbol and principal referent of a situation of human rights violations in Chile, and of the struggle to end the dictatorship which fosters them' (Silva de Muller, no date: 20). They therefore represent, also, the energy mobilised in the struggle against Pinochet. Gloria Torres continues: 'The arpilleras have symbolised the capacity to create and denounce, which has not weakened even at times of greatest repression and violence'. She sees the arpillera, furthermore, as replacing the judicial system which broke down during the regime (given that the Court of Appeals refused to recognise that people had disappeared, saying that they had never existed or that they had moved to another country). The arpilleras, therefore, were amparo proceedings put forth to the whole community: 'The arpillera is a work of art, but more than this... they are [amparo] proceedings thrown out to the community, which

accumulate the irrefutable testimony of what was and still is our Chile' (Silva de Muller, no date: 20).

For resistance groups in Chile (the 'second Chile') the arpillera was a symbol of Chile's suffering. An arpillera showing a dove, for example, was used in the funeral march for the priest André Jarlan, murdered by the military in the *población* of La Victoria.



The funeral march for André Jarlan; marchers hold an arpillera depicting a dove

The marchers associated the arpillera with their struggle. For a left-wing photographer who took a photograph of the scene, the arpillera carried political connotations ('[it had] a political meaning'). This photographer was shocked when he saw an American tourist with an arpillera of Mickey Mouse:

'Two gringos arrived to investigate [the burning of a young man by the military]... I talked to one of them. One of them- it was the period of protests- had an arpillera of Mickey Mouse. They had ordered it. How weird. It was grotesque. That gringa was a sort of producer. They spend all their time in crisis areas. This was just one more souvenir... It was really quite something, in the Hotel Sheraton. Outside all was chaos- and they were going off with a Mickey Mouse arpillera'. (Hoppe, approximate transcription of telephone conversation)

For the people who opposed Pinochet, as well as the Vicaría, the arpillera represented suffering and resistance, and became a symbol of the struggle:

Ana Maria For every event we had, for the Day of Life, for the death of André Jarlan, for

the closing of the Vicaría, the symbol was always an arpillera. And the women would be asked 'Please would you make a mural'. In other words, they had a presence, I would say, in the world of resistance to the dictatorship, which was

very significant.

Jacqueline Can you give me examples of other acts of resistance where the arpillera was

present?

Ana Maria I don't know if so obviously of resistance. I saw that the Vicaria especially, and

the area Vicaría offices, and the people who worked with them, were always linked with the arpillera. For example, if you had to give someone a present, for example on the occasion of the symposium of human rights, to the conference people who came from all over the world (in '78), you would give arpilleras. I remember big murals. It could have been, for example, when the Pope came. Important international visits. It was always thought that the best present one could give was an arpillera. And not only an arpillera, because then we would laugh, 'I don't believe it, I bet they gave them an arpillera', we would say, because it was like- for example, Paco and Lucía would come to play for the

Vicaría workers, and they would give them an arpillera. If Juan Manuel Serrat came, they would give him an arpillera. It became like a symbol, right?

came, they would give him an arphiera. It became like a symbol, right?

Jacqueline Of what?

Ana Maria Of resistance- I don't know if of resistance, but of the political situation which

was being lived at the time, which was a mixture of pain with artistic expression. It was the pain of this nation which was there- and which was sewn in these things which had- let's say they also had the merit of being something made with rags, which did not cost anything, which was not- which was not a symbol of consumerism, let's say. That's why, as I say, there was a lot to it.

(Ana Maria Medioli, ex-Vicaría area office manager)

The arpillera was a visual confirmation that problems existed in Chile, and a tangible incentive to resist the cause of the problems. As Rowe and Schelling (1991: 10) point out: 'This means that culture is not simply derived from class, as if it were a crude form of ideology, but on the contrary plays a primary role in challenging or maintaining given

social relationships'. The arpillera, in symbolising the suffering of the victims of the regime, was a challenge to it and a force which contributed to overturning the existing social relationships in Chile.

For members of the resistance community the arpillera was also a sign of membership in this resistance community, or 'second Chile'. The sight of an arpillera in another Chilean's house signified that one was on home territory, in a society in which many people were Pinochet supporters. As an ex-Vicaría worker describes:

'I connect it with what the fish could have been in the times of the catacombs. That was the symbolism, if you like. Of identification, of complicity... I mean, sometimes you didn't know what sort of people you were meeting, for some reason-like, you made a new acquaintance. I, for example, moved house in 1974. So you start to have new neighbours. And you have no idea who these neighbours are. I personally was living in a really difficult situation because I was not living with my husband, my husband was in hiding, etc. And the fact that a neighbour-I found an arpillera at a neighbour's, in a totally new neighbourhood, it was like "Yes!". I was sure of everything, you understand? That here I can talk about what I liked'. (Gloria Cruz)

The fish Gloria refers to is the fish used in Roman times to symbolise the Christian faith. Clandestine Christians used the fish as a secret marker of their identity. For Gloria, an arpillera in someone else's house meant that the owner of the arpillera was left-wing, just as for an early Christian, the sign of the fish indicated that the person with whom the sign was connected, was also Christian. The meaning of the arpillera for the resistance community is, therefore, in large part a function of the left wing, and resistance-oriented stance of this community. As Zolberg (1990: 137) points out that the aesthetic choices of an audience show them to be acting in terms of group membership, using the arts for more complex ends which can be economic and symbolic, on the basis of cultural codes. In the arpillera case, the individuals' ideology and politics influence their 'choice' of the arpillera.

To exiles and the resistance community abroad, the arpillera was also a document carrying accurate information about the goings on in Chile. As another ex-Vicaría employee describes:

'I also remember that the orders from abroad- the themes- got more and more sharp ['puntudos']. What people wanted abroad was to find out what was happening here' (Riet Delsing)

For the buyers of the Agrupación's arpilleras, the arpillera were (and continue to be) a symbol of pain and resistance. Agosin's most recent articles are peppered with the word 'pain' when she refers to these arpilleras. In as much, the arpilleras are a counter-example to Canclini's claim (1982: 102) that urban and tourist consumption of handicrafts causes them to be increasingly decontextualised and resignified on their journey to the museum and the boutique. This is not a case of the handicraft's use at home being replaced by a purely aesthetic appreciation, as Canclini suggests. Even though the arpilleras may not hold exactly the same meaning for the consumers as the makers, their meaning does not change so dramatically. The buyers abroad did appreciate the denunciation and information-giving functions which the arpilleristas gave the arpilleras.

For the buyers of arpilleras of the decorative period, an arpillera was a wall hanging which they could use in their homes or as a gift. According to the manager of a chain of Third World product shops in Switzerland, many arpillera buyers were the parents of visually impaired children, buying because of the texture and three-dimensionality. These buyers saw the arpillera as an expression of economically deprived women, but their understanding went little further than this and was often misguided. A

London shopkeeper liked the arpillera scenes of village life because 'that is where they live, in villages'. Graburn (1976) proposes a model whereby Fourth World objects gradually lose their original meanings, forms, and purposes as they are increasingly made as art forms, for an external group of buyers. They become 'commercial arts'. The decorative arpilleras, like these 'commercial arts', have less meaning than they did in their earlier form.

Intermediary buyers of decorative arpilleras in Europe view the arpillera as an expression of a local reality. They like to think they are allowing the natives some creative expression; it makes them feel the people are not 'prostituting' themselves in selling their crafts. Edward Millard (a marketing manager of the crafts division of Oxfam) likes to buy 'authentic arpilleras', as his description of Peruvian arpilleras suggests:

'We try to, and I think we do maintain elements of local culture in there [the crafts we sell] so the sorts of things that come through have a very strongly Latin American, tropical element in them. So you may well get local festivals and you may very well get things called 'cosecha' ['harvest'] they often do where they're actually harvesting particular tropical plants, of the reality of their lives. So it won't be the sort of scene you can translate into - could be the British countryside-but nevertheless, it's sort of universal.'

(Interview with Ed Millard, marketing manager of Oxfam Trading)

Many of the Peruvian arpilleristas in fact live in the shantytowns of Lima and never participate in 'cosechas' or see tropical forests. European and American buyers have an image of 'local culture' in Latin America which is in fact a fabrication. But buyers are reassured by the idea that producers are 'expressing their culture', and moreover, exotic scenes sell better than banal ones. The views of buyers such as Ed Millard are representative of the kind of fantasies of the 'Other' described by Clifford (1988) in his

analysis of Modernism's fascination with African art. Artwork comes to represent the European fantasy of the tropical (in the Peruvian case) even though much of the country in question (and indeed much of Latin America) is neither tropical nor dominated by quaint farmers harvesting exotic fruit.

For the Pinochet government the arpilleras were subversive and 'defamatory' documents, telling lies about Chile. The government took the arpilleras very seriously; when customs officials found a packet at the airport in 1978, the arpilleras were portrayed as slanderous on national television news that night. Articles appeared in newspapers; the title of an article in the pro-government newspaper La Segunda was 'The Tapestries of Defamation' (Brett 1986: 50). The article stated:

'Our newspaper has already - in November 1977 to be exact-denounced the fact that in certain parishes of Greater Santiago the people have been used to carry out work of opposition to the government in the form of handicrafts. This work (we now have complete proof) is handed over to the Vicaría de la Solidaridad and then sent abroad. The handicrafts, for example patchworks, carry clear Marxist messages and are sold in the US, Sweden and lately in France'.

Such a strong reaction on the government's part may be accounted for by the fact that handicrafts are bound up with national identity, as Rowe and Schelling (1991: 4) suggest: 'Although it is difficult to generalize, it is probably valid to say that in Latin America the idea of folklore has been bound up with the idea of national identity, and has been used by the state, among other things, in order to bring about national unity.'

So seriously did the government take them, that CEMA Chile (see Chapter 2) began to produce arpilleras which painted a rosy picture of events in Chile, for sale abroad, as its director (Pinochet's wife) describes:

'We called it that, sort of like naïf, but we used to say that it was very child-like, let's say, no, spontaneous, spontaneous art. What did they do? We used to have competitions. We would say "What does the institution [CEMA Chile] represent for you?" And they- they would show in the picture what it represented for them. "How do you view the education we are giving your children? Put it in an arpillera". There are beautiful ones- "What was the 11th of September [the day of the Coup d'Etat] for you?" Wonderful, those pictures. I remember there was one beautiful one, I have it, they gave it to me. You could see the dark days, the three dark years [of Allende's presidency], all grey, a grey mountain. Then you had the 11th of September, the arpillera got lighter, until you had the sun. Just gorgeous things, a very pretty allegory, very well embroidered. And of course the other people, there was a group of people which left-wing people managed, and they would give them materials so that they made pictures, of course, about what they thought they were living. It was not true, because they were embroidering, they were not living what they were embroidering, but anyway. They thought. Of course, those got a lot of sales abroad because European countries, a lot of them, helped those people, I think often without knowing the truth, no? Because of lots of misinformation. And others knowing the truth because they were left-wing people of other countries. And left-wing people always help each other. (Interview with Pinochet's wife, Lucía Hiriart, director of CEMA Chile)

For the Pinochet government, therefore, the arpillera depicted false and subversive information about Chile. For the Aylwin government, on the other hand, the arpillera was the token of the valiant struggle of the poor and oppressed. President Aylwin publicly praised the arpilleristas and shook hands with the director of the Southern *coordinadora*. It was his government which set up the FESOL, as a tribute to the work of microentrepreneurs and artisans during the dictatorship.

Museums were, for the most part, indifferent to the arpilleras. The director of Chile's National Folk Art Museum viewed the arpillera as political: '...of denunciation, which could be the role which the arpilleras have, they are contingent, they denounce situations' (interview with Tobar Urzua). He did not think them worthy of display on the grounds that they were not 'traditional enough'. The only Chilean museum in which arpilleras have been exhibited is the Salvador Allende Museum. This is a museum of art which was made in sympathy with the Allende regime. Abroad, they have been exhibited mostly by human rights organisations, development organisations (including the United

Nations in New York and Nairobi on the occasion of the beginning of the decade for women), galleries, and schools.

It is possible that no famous museum houses them because they do not bear a signature, and their makers have not passed through a certain 'career', prerequisites identified by Zolberg (1990: 24). Another possible explanation is the marginalised status of the arpilleristas within Chilean society. Discrimination against marginalised groups has been noted elsewhere; in a craft-making project for non-white women in the inner city areas of Manchester, the project director found: 'Crafts which incorporate the traditions of non-European countries are seen of low importance and become marginalised. There is virtually little funding available to promote them' (Walk, no date: 5). Similarly, the museum world has traditionally placed less value on the art of women. Smith's (1987:8) observation that autobiographies from seemingly vocationless women have been judged neither culturally nor aesthetically significant by earlier normative criteria, applies equally to the arpillera. The arpillera's status as a working class, narrative of politically and economically marginalised women partially explains its rejection by the art museums of Santiago.

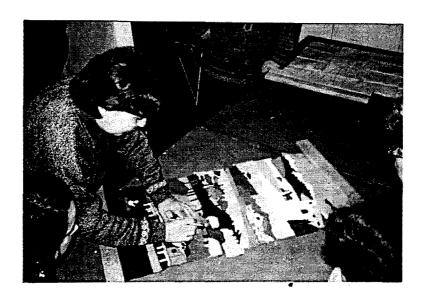
Prisma's Arpilleras

For Prisma's customers, the arpilleras are decorative and/or functional objects.

When the buyers are tourists buying landscape arpilleras, the arpilleras are souvenirs.

Two European tourists, for example, bought the 'map of Chile' wall hanging as a

souvenir, and one requested that it say 'Chile' at the bottom. The buyers of arpilleras of the Místicas group see the arpilleras as functional and decorative objects with religious overtones. They typically use them to decorate their churches, sell in their shops or send to people.



The map: a souvenir of Chile

For the arpilleristas of both groups, the arpilleras had little more meaning than would products for which they would be paid. They took an employee-in-a-company stance to them. For example, when the director of Prisma gave the Místicas group designs to copy from (signifying that they would no longer create their own) the group reflected that this would make their work easier.

The Macul Embroideries

The arpilleras of the Macul group also had different meanings according to who was buying. To the Macul group's foreign clients (often tourists or short-term inhabitants of Chile), the embroideries were 'souvenirs'. For consumers at home, however, they were a symbol of the Municipality of Macul (as the Mayor once stated in a speech). The Mayor, for example, bought Christmas card embroideries. Whenever an important person came to the Macul, the gift offered was an embroidery. The Chilean government has also offered the embroideries to important visitors. When Hillary Clinton came to Chile, for example, she was presented with an embroidery.



Embroidery of Macul group showing a 'typical' Chilean wedding



Detail of wedding scene

Vianna (1994) points out in his study of samba that the choice of art form as symbol of a nation has little to do with the art form itself, and more to do with a confluence of circumstances (such as which people happen to be sitting around a table when such a decision is made). In the Macul case, the group's independence from a politicised institution such as the Vicaría, its close relationship with one of the Mayors of Santiago, the apolitical nature of the products and their cheerfulness and attractiveness, are likely to be factors in the state and Municipality's choosing this particular handicraft to represent it.

The Changing Meaning of the Arpillera

The meaning of the arpillera, therefore, changes according to who is doing the 'looking'. As Zolberg (1990: 24) suggests in her survey of the sociology of art, the arts are socially constructed with symbolic meanings that are not embedded in the works but change under different social conditions. How the viewers relate to the arpilleristas and the ideology they uphold, as well as the institution which supports them, are prime factors determining how they view the arpillera. Groups reacted in certain ways to the arpilleras of the Vicaria in part because of the left wing and resistance connotations of the Vicaria itself. For example, because the Vicaría was a centre of resistance and because the buyers were left wing and often victims of the regime, to these buyers the arpilleras of the politicised trade period were a symbol of pain in Chile. Other factors influencing the way the arpillera is perceived include: the content of the art work, the personal circumstances of the buyers and makers, and the political connections of the group. Onlookers, therefore, see art from their position in relation to it, ideological, institutional and personal. Art works are not endowed with intrinsic meanings; they are only as meaningful as groups care to make them (Bennett 1980: 6). Meaning is defined more by institutional and personal circumstances than by the intrinsic quality of the work.

CONCLUSION

The Vicaría organised a system of relations which enabled it to sell arpilleras abroad. It set up the system by organising stable and repeated interactions between people, thereby creating a network for the flow of information and resources. For the

Vicaría, there were two versions of the arpillera trade, one succeeding the other historically. The first was a more politicised version of the trade, lasting until the last years of the dictatorship, and the second was a more decorative version. In the first, politicised period, the point of the arpillera trade was to spread news about Chile, and to bring resources to the Vicaría and victims of the regime. The Vicaría trained the women to turn out denunciatory arpilleras for this purpose. It developed a system for getting the arpilleras safely out of the country, which involved a series of steps performed by a chain of people who sympathised with the cause and who were willing, at great personal risk, and in a clandestine fashion, to pass the arpilleras on to the next link in the chain.

Intermediary and end buyers learned about the events in Chile, helped in a material way, and expressed solidarity by buying the arpilleras. The buyers to whom the Vicaría sold included: Chilean organisations and individuals, human rights activists, academics, sympathisers, NGOs and shops selling Third World products. End buyers who bought from these groups, included Chileans and politically aware individuals and institutions, both abroad and in Chile. The whole network, from arpilleristas to end-buyers, together made up a fabric of people who shared an ideal for Chile which differed dramatically from Pinochet's Chile; they were citizens of a 'second Chile'.

The system changed towards the end of the Pinochet regime, from a politicised form of the trade to a decorative form. Because of the buyers' perception of Chile as no longer facing political and economic problems, and because of structural changes in the market, the Vicaría could no longer continue to sell as it had done, so it changed the nature of the trade. It made the women turn out bucolic arpilleras, and it came to rely on

buyers with interests which were more solidarity oriented in a broad sense, and even commercial, rather than focused on the Chilean situation. The intermediary buyers became more aggressive and the end buyers were relatively ignorant about Chile and more interested in helping the economically deprived in a general sense.

The institutions to which the arpillera groups are affiliated affect the systems of trade through which they are sold. The character of the Vicaría's trade is linked to its status as major resistance institution. The trade of women from the Agrupación is now affected by the Agrupación's status as one of the major human rights organisations in Chile. The commercial and church orientation of Prisma, results in the Prisma arpilleras being sold in church organisations or commercial outlets, or to tourists who come to Prisma. The Macul group's links with the Mayor impact its distribution system today.

Just as the distribution systems change according to the institutional affiliation and nature of the arpillera groups, so does the meaning of the arpillera. The arpillera had very different meanings for different groups of people. What the arpillera meant depended what institution the 'buyer' was affiliated to, what their political ideology was, what their personal concerns were, and what the arpillera depicted. Meaning is defined more by institutional and personal circumstances than by the intrinsic quality of the work.

CHAPTER 5: THE CHANGING ICONOGRAPHY OF THE ARPILLERA

The arpillera was not a spontaneous expression of the women. Rather, both in its inception and later, it was moulded by a series of factors. Primary amongst these was the institution under which the groups worked. The Comité (and later the Vicaría) shaped the arpillera initially in that its employees instructed the women in the appropriate iconography and techniques. Once the basic arpillera form was established, the Vicaría continued to influence its form and content by giving the arpilleristas instructions about what to depict. These instructions concerned subject matter, choice of colours, materials, and finish. Over time, the arpilleras of the shantytown groups changed from highly political in content, to apolitical and naive. There were other influences on the arpillera: the concerns of the group, the emotions and interests of the makers, the physical surroundings and political context in which the group operated and the creativity of a group member or teacher. The arpillera is not, then, the raw expression of a people finding their voice.

The first part of the chapter describes the evolution of the shantytown and Agrupación arpilleras. The second part analyses the main influences on the make-up of the arpillera, of which the Vicaría's interpretation of the buyers' needs forms a major part. The third part treats the influence of the form and content of the arpillera on the arpilleristas' lives.

I use naive in the sense of devoid of social critique, innocent in tone, and expressing of happy scenes.

THE ORIGINS OF THE ARPILLERA

Where the idea of the arpillera came from is unclear and there are various contradictory accounts. Violeta Morales, the sister of a disappeared person and member of the Agrupación, claimed that it was invented collectively by the members of the Agrupación's arpillera workshop (which started in 1974). On one occasion she stated that it was invented thinking of the woollen tapestries of a coastal village called Isla Negra, and the woollen embroideries of Macul (the predecessors of the Macul embroidery group studied here). However, on another occasion she said that the idea of the arpillera came from the woollen tapestries (also called 'arpilleras') made in the Fifties by the famous Chilean folklorist, Violeta Parra (this explanation is the most widely believed by arpilleristas today). Violeta Morales is consistent, however, in asserting that the very first arpilleras were made in the Agrupación's workshop. The idea that the arpillera was inspired by Violeta Parra's work is also the most widespread account of the origins.

Another member of the Agrupación, Gala Torres, claimed in an interview that the arpillera was first made in the *poblaciones* and not in the Agrupación. According to her, the idea came from the traditional practice of doing appliqué work on household objects (such as tablecloths) in the home. Valentina Bonne, an artist employed by the Vicaría to work with the women of the Agrupación and shantytown workshops, claims that she invented the arpillera, thinking of the Panamanian molas (appliqué works) and the North American quilt. Two or three other individuals support her claim, but several more claim pointedly that she did not. Still others (e.g. Winnie Lira, the director of the Fundación

Solidaridad) suggest that the arpillera was first made in the Agrupación but also in the prisons, by political prisoners.

According to all accounts, however, the arpillera did not exist in the form it does today, previous to 1973. Whilst it may have been inspired by local or foreign forms, it is essentially a new creation, as Brett (1986: 32) also points out. What is certain is that the arpillera was first made in Santiago around 1974-1975 by groups of women of two sorts: relatives or spouses of people whom Pinochet had 'disappeared', and inhabitants of shantytowns suffering economic difficulties. The arpilleras of the former category appear to have first been made in the Comité. As far as the second category is concerned, the arpillera appears to have first been made in the Southern suburb of Santiago called Puente Alto, spreading from here to other neighbourhoods such as Lo Hermida (in the East) and Nuevo Amanecer, then throughout Santiago and to smaller towns beyond.

What is also certain is that as soon as they joined the workshops the arpilleristas were trained, by either the Vicaría employees or other arpilleristas (who themselves had been trained by the Vicaría). It is not the case, as Brett (1986: 9) suggests, that they were 'self-taught or untaught artists'. Several informants point to Gloria Torres, a social worker, as the person who started arpillera production in the workshops. She claims she thought it would be useful for the relatives of the disappeared and the shantytown women to express their pain, tell the story and be able to earn an income by making arpilleras:

'They didn't have any source of income, they didn't have money for transport or anything, and on the other hand they had a tremendous need to express themselves, to be together with others, to... So, one day I thought that it was necessary for them to participate in a group, that was the basic idea... My idea was that they could make their tapestries and through those tapestries tell

what was happening to them, as they had no means of being able to tell it via other media, they had to denounce efficiently.'
(Interview with Gloria Torres)

At some stage in the beginnings of the Agrupación workshop (there are conflicting versions as to when) she brought in Valentina Bonne, who thought up the arpillera or perfected the arpilleras which the women in the workshop had already thought up (as the women and other Vicaría workers claim). By the end of 1974 the Vicaría employees were telling the women what to depict in the arpilleras, teaching them how to do it, providing some of the materials, and selling the arpilleras both abroad and within Chile.

A CHRONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ARPILLERA 1974-1996

The Shantytown Arpillera

In the beginning, the arpilleristas were taught to make arpilleras showing the political repression and economic hardship of life in the *poblaciones*. Over the years, their arpilleras became less denunciatory until, by 1996, they showed people picking fruit in fields, selling vegetables in markets and dancing in a circle. The main factor causing these changes was the Vicaría's interpretation of what the buyers wanted. When art is made to be sold, its makers will modify it to conform to the consumer's taste, as Bennett (1980: xii) found in his study of rock musicians. The influence of buyers on the aesthetic objects of the Third World is a common occurrence. Nash (1993: 10) finds it in the crafts

of Central America: 'Feedback, based on sales or promotional agents, regarding the popularity of certain objects or designs inevitably influences future production'. From the arpillera's beginnings, the subject-matter, mood, size, technique, colours, materials, finish and how it was put together, were a product of the interactions between the arpilleristas and the Vicaría, and the Vicaría and the buyers.

1974- early Eighties

In the first few months of arpillera production, Vicaría employees were active teaching the women that the government was oppressive and made them suffer (see Chapter 6), and showing them how to translate this into stick figures in the arpilleras. They gave information about the 'Chilean reality' (defined as economic crisis and repression), and encouraged the women to produce arpilleras which emphasised these problems (partly because this is what the solidarity market wanted, see Chapter 4). As Zolberg (1990: 135) suggests, 'the ideology, cultural policy and politics of different support structures have varying impacts on the kinds and styles of art created by artists, as well as on the artists themselves'.

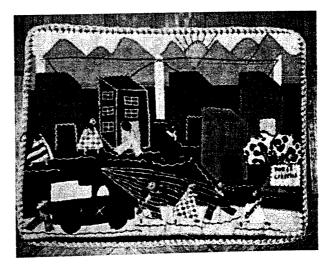
The arpilleras, therefore, show the economic problems of the first years of the Pinochet regime. Poverty, hunger, unemployment and repression are the most common underlying themes. They typically show soup kitchens, people selling their possessions for food, looking in rubbish bins for something to eat, and queuing up for water at the public water pump. To suggest unemployment they show people outside factories which

have signs saying 'No vacancies' and crosses over the doors, or a husband in a room at home looking depressed and getting drunk. The arpilleras also show people's response to poverty: the survival organisations (soup kitchens, collective shopping groups, collective vegetable patches and collective bread ovens), and private makeshift arrangements (such as hooking up to public electricity lines to steal electricity). Some arpilleras reflect other problems connected with the new government, such as homelessness as a result of people being evicted, or the shortage of housing. As one woman describes:

'If you want to know more about us 'arpilleristas', just look at our arpilleras. That is where our life story is told. There you will find our homes, our children, our neighbourhoods and shantytowns, our poverty, our grassroots organisations and above all our struggle'

(1991 illustrated Vicaría calendar)

Scenes of repression include tanks invading shantytowns, spraying water at the inhabitants; soldiers rounding up men; and the military chasing and beating people in the streets



A lorry spraying water at shantytown inhabitants

Very often these images of repression and crisis are complemented by a little pocket in the sacking at the back of the arpillera, describing the content of the arpillera, for example: 'Our husbands are unemployed and our children are hungry'. As Brett (1986: 19) points out: 'Their psychic charge has to do with their revelation of the significance of [historical] events in human terms.' The arpilleras show the day-to-day consequences of structural changes.

Many arpilleras of the period depict the theme of solidarity, often by showing the arpilleristas displaying solidarity to other groups. One arpillera, for example, shows the arpilleristas coming to a hunger strike of the Agrupación women, out of solidarity. Another expressed solidarity towards artists. The arpilleristas had internalised this central Vicaría ethic.

Although their content is serious and even shocking, the arpilleras are similar to children's art in their use of stick-like figures, box houses, and simplified trees. The colours and texture are very expressive, however. Dark skies, for example, represent the a black view of the Chilean situation, and a mood of despair.

All these arpilleras are acts of resistance in that they belie the image of economic success and 'order' promoted by Pinochet, and instead paint a picture of chaos and disorder (the violence of the repression and savagery of the hunger), and state an alternative set of values (solidarity as opposed to individualism). In doing so, they overturn all official versions of the Chilean reality. Their presenting a different picture of the situation is an assertion that they are being deceived and abused.

The Vicaría employees encouraged the women to use used material for their arpilleras, because they knew they could not afford new material, and because their buyers were more interested in content than form, probably even preferring used cloth because it suggested the extent of the women's poverty. The Vicaría provided the cloth or allowed the women to use their own clothes (e.g. wool from their own unravelled sweaters). The Vicaría tolerated pieces of flour or potato sack for the backs of the arpillera because this was the cheapest available sturdy material (the women often collected the sacks at markets).

The arpilleras of this period typically measure 38 cm x 42 cm. The arpilleristas were often asked by the Vicaría to make murals, consisting of a number of arpilleras sewn together.

Early to late Eighties

In the Eighties, the Vicaría began requesting that the arpilleras be less violent and political. It told the women that it would not accept arpilleras with lots of blood for example. This is partly because a packet of arpilleras was opened by soldiers at the airport and the Vicaría feared the women were endangering themselves in selling such heavily denunciatory work. It is also because buyers abroad began complaining that the arpilleras were too violent. This trend towards a softer denunciation became increasingly marked as the decade progressed. Arpilleras began to show fewer scenes of violence

(beatings, for example). Instead they showed the problems in more conceptual terms (e.g. the word 'rights' began to appear on arpilleras), or simply more mildly.

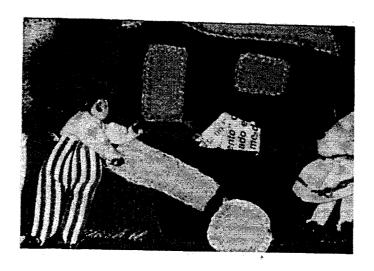


'Every working man has the right to a just and satisfactory remuneration. Art. 23'



'Every person has the right to rest'

Themes of hunger and unemployment, for example, continued, and became particularly prevalent in 1983 when unemployment reached 30% (Leiva and Petras 1986: 11). The arpilleras show people with carts picking up old newspapers, cardboard and wood (as way of earning some money), for example.



An unemployed shantytown dweller collects newspapers as a way of earning some money

They also show people working for the government's make-work programmes. Other shantytown problems also emerge in the arpilleras. One arpillera shows life going on as normal but there is a sign outside a chapel saying 'No to alcoholism'. These dark sides of life are for the most part taboo: there is no reference to wife beating, rape or drug addiction, common occurrence in these neighbourhoods.

A new theme, the public protest, appeared when the protests began (in May 1983). Protest arpilleras typically show groups of people marching with banners (saying, for example, 'No to death' and 'No to torture'). They also show people building barricades to keep the tanks out of the shantytowns, people carrying candles through the street at night, banging saucepans by their houses, or honking their car horns (suggested by the embroidered words 'tu tu'). In 1988 images of protests and marches of many different pro-democracy groups (in favour of the 'No' campaign) appeared in the arpilleras.

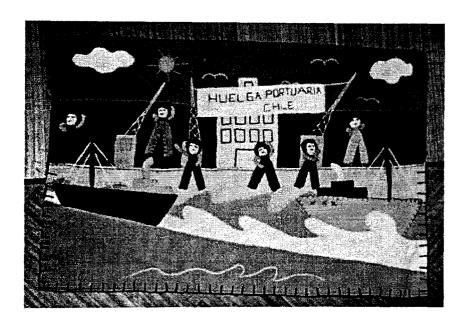


Street protest in which women bang saucepans and shout: 'And he will fall'.



Women protest and support the 'Campaign for the No vote'

The concerns of other groups are prevalent in the arpilleras of the Eighties (starting in the late Seventies): artists, students, feminists, and the relatives of the disappeared, for example.



The arpilleras show a concern for the protests of other groups: 'Port workers' strike'

The women's political consciousness had extended to include an understanding that these other groups were also suffering the consequences of repression and the economic crisis. The arpilleras, then, began to express the widening concerns of the women and their new tendency towards conceptualisation of problems (see Chapter 6).

Arpilleras about women's issues become common in the Eighties. They show scenes of Women's Day events, and protests with banners demanding 'Democracy in the country and in the home', for example. They reflect the arpilleristas' new awareness of women's issues, resulting in part from contact with feminists and by the attending of talks on gender, organised by the Vicaría (see Chapter 7).

Another new theme was the different ethnic groups in Chile. The arpilleristas of the Puente Alto group, for example, began to make arpilleras showing indigenous groups at work in their villages, in the North and South of Chile.



A Mapuche scene with typical huts, and trees of the South of Chile

To someone who did not know that the indigenous peoples of Chile had been severely abused during the Pinochet period, the arpilleras might look like scenes of Indian life. However, these arpilleras were politically motivated in that 1993 was the year of the

ethnic populations and there was a debate at the time in Chile about returning land which had been taken away from the Mapuche by Pinochet. The group identified this as a human rights cause, and claims that it thought up the theme, without prompting from the Vicaría.

The denunciation became more and more innocuous as the decade went on.

Arpilleras complaining about the destruction of the environment, or showing literacy classes, became common. These focused on very specific issues and did not point a finger at any group. Moreover, they were fashionable concerns abroad. In general, the arpilleras of the late Eighties lack the emotional charge of the earlier ones.

During the Eighties the arpilleristas began to use extraneous materials, mostly string, twigs, wool and paper.



Detail of an arpillera which incorporates real twigs into the scene

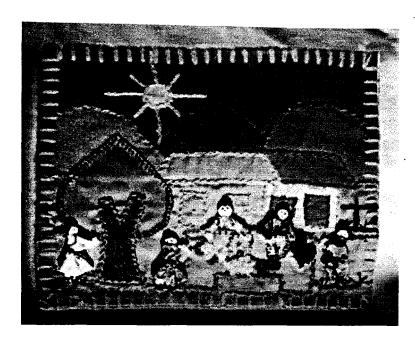
They also began to make three-dimensional figures, replacing the flat figures of the earlier period. One arpillerista describes this new interest in virtuosity:

'The beginning was hard. The dolls seemed so lifeless on the surface of the arpillera until one woman thought of making them as rounded little figures with clothes and all. So the little people turned out to be active, lively, versatile.' (arpillerista quoted in Agosin 1988: 53)

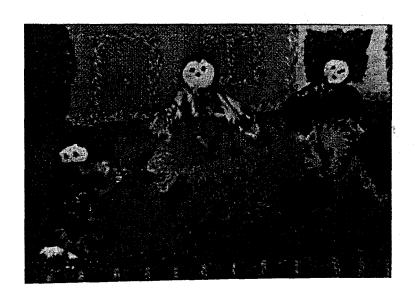
The arpilleristas begin, during this period, to focus on form as much as content. This is partly because the Vicaría encouraged visually interesting arpilleras, to please a market which (towards the late Eighties) was increasingly interested in the decorative role of the arpillera.

The Nineties

By the early Nineties most themes of violence had disappeared. The arpilleras at this time were for the most part apolitical and naive. Typical scenes include women doing their laundry, arpillera-making, baking bread, and selling fruit and vegetables (depicted in great detail) at market stalls, children going to school or dancing in a circle ('la ronda'), and fruit picking. Although they are set in the shantytowns, there is no indication of poverty, dirt or other shantytown problems.



An arpillera-making scene of the Nineties



Detail of arpillera-making scene of the Nineties

The *poblaciones* are depicted as colourful, green places with flowers and trees, and the Andes as a backdrop². These are a watered-down version of what continues to be a harsh reality in the shantytowns.



Cheerful scene of children going to school

There are also ethnic group scenes including scenes of the villages of Chilean Indians, both in the desert North and the lush South, with their typical costumes, villages and settings (the lush, forested South or the desert North), and a number of Nativity scenes.

² The Andes have nearly always appeared as a backdrop, so as to indicate that this is Chile.



Detail arpillera with Nativity scene

In having the women depict such colourful and cheerful scenes, the Vicaría was responding to the new buyers' demand for cheerful artworks to decorate the home (see Chapter 4). In Switzerland, for example, Magasins du Monde buyers wanted bright, cheerful arpilleras as presents or to decorate their children's rooms (according to a Magasins du Monde sales woman interviewed in January 1995). The following exchange between myself and Ed Millard, an Oxfam manager responsible for the marketing of Latin American crafts, illustrates the influence of a market seeking more decorative arpilleras:

Jacqueline

What do you think is the reason for this discrepancy- the images of the village life but the makers actually living in poverty?

Ed

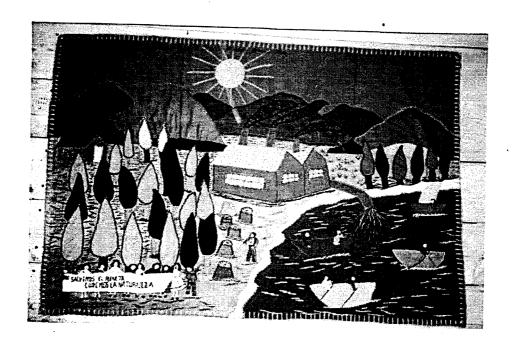
Well, I think that's commercial interest. I mean, people realise that if you want to sell things, you've actually got to sell something bright and cheerful because people don't want to put... you see, the problem with the original arpilleras is, you know, who's going to buy them. Unless it's for a heavily solidarity reason you're no going to buy them to make the house look pretty. So nobody wants to put prison bars on the wall and images of people being shot.

- -

The new buyers sought out prettiness and the Vicaría made the arpilleristas adapt their work accordingly.

Political themes are rare, but a common one in the very early Nineties is the freeing of political prisoners. A number of arpilleras depict people holding banners saying 'Freedom to the political prisoners' or 'There is no democracy so long as there are political prisoners'. One also finds traces of a number of social themes, such as women's survival organisations: arpillera workshops (including a vignette of women rolling wool into balls or carrying burlap), embroidery workshops, textile workshops, bakeries, laundry co-operatives, communal kitchens, recycling workshops and literacy workshops.

The Vicaría does accept arpilleras showing a concern with political issues in a wide sense. Many arpilleras of the period refer to the problem of environmental degradation. For example, a group of women in the woods might be shown carrying a banner saying 'Let's look after nature' or 'No to smog' (smog is a hotly-debated problem in Santiago).



Arpillera showing polluted factory, chopped trees, and a banner saying 'Let's save the planet; let's look after nature'

The arpilleras made by rural groups showed farming activities in a rural context, with different kinds of trees, crops and animals. The scenes have great detail: each fruit is shown, each furrow in the fields and each vegetable. The arpilleras show fields and a few houses, horses and carts, people picking fruit, putting it in baskets, planting, tending to animals, sweeping, baking and selling at stalls. They also depict people fishing, washing, drying clothes, making wool, carrying sacks of flour, queuing for water at a pump, or crossing the river in a raft.



Arpillera of a rural scene by Melipilla group

There is considerable standardisation of theme during the period. The Vicaría tolerated a very small range of arpillera themes, so that each group produces far fewer themes now than in the past.³ The Santa Adriana group only produced six themes in 1995, for example. These themes had to be depicted in a standard way, so they looked almost identical. The women were no longer, as in the Seventies, allowed to depict a wide variety of themes, in a relatively personal way. They had specific templates and knew exactly where each element (e.g. a school bell) fit in the arpillera, and what form it should take. The Vicaría's insistence on standard arpilleras was not very different from a factory's insistence that employees turn out standard shirts. For the arpilleristas, making

³ A looser form of standardisation had occurred much earlier, in the sense that the arpillera groups had always produced numerous versions of the same theme, and the arpilleras of the same theme look similar. However, there were a far greater number of themes, and generally more variation within them, and in matters of form (the incorporation of extraneous materials, hair colour, sky colour, etc.) in the Seventies.

arpilleras was less a creative activity and more a system of production akin to the production of manufactured products. The new buyers and Vicaría's demands led to routinisation.

The routinised and commercial orientation of arpillera-making is also reflected in the fact that the messages at the back of the arpilleras typically read 'thank you for choosing our Chilean arpilleras'. These messages ceased to appear after around 1992, however, because, according to one arpillerista, the arpilleras are meant to be easily read, so no message is necessary.

The Vicaría's insistence on standardisation is in marked contrast to what is acceptable in the 'High Art' world (that artists produce work which is incessantly unique⁴). One of the reasons that standardisation is permissible to all the actors in the arpillera world is precisely because these actors do not categorise the arpilleras as high art. Nor do they expect the arpilleristas to behave like artists (the arpilleristas do not sign their work, for example). Graburn (1976) suggests that occasionally when art is introduced to a national or international market, the creators are persuaded to begin to include signatures, but this is not the case here⁵. At most, the name of the workshop will appear on the back of the arpillera, but it is relatively rare. Different art worlds, therefore, obey different rules and value different qualities.

⁴ I am defining the High Art world as that which involves the production and circulation of art works in official institutions widely recognised as serving this purpose, e.g. art schools, universities, and museums and galleries.

⁵ However, Helen Trebee, a seller of Peruvian arpilleras at a stall on Essex University campus, always shows a photograph of the arpillerista when she sells, so as to identify the arpillera as the work of an individual.

Most of the arpilleras of the period contain great detail (each fruit in the market stall is shown, or drips from washing being wrung out, for example). The arpilleristas use a wide variety of extraneous materials: tiny match sticks, plastic tablet containers, sacking, foil, beans, wire (for bicycles), plastic netting (for fishing nets), and even tiny pieces of cooked bread. Technical mastery is an important concern of the Vicaría's, again because the buyers now want decorative and visually interesting arpilleras. The new arpilleras with their emphasis on attractiveness to a market are like Becker's (1982) commercial art, an art form concerned with displaying virtuosity.

The foreign market of the Nineties was also interested in 'handmade-ness', as Ed Millard suggested for Oxfam. The end buyers like to differentiate their products from the group of mass produced and machine-produced products. This leads the Vicaría to insist that the arpilleras be sewn by hand rather than by machine, even though some women have sewing machines. The new market is also interested in quality, and for this reason the Vicaría demands that the arpilleristas use new cloth.

In the Nineties new arpillera sizes emerged. As well as the standard size, there was a large size (approximately 1m x 1.5 m), a 'long' size (half the width and the same length as the medium arpilleras) and (most common, together with the standard-now called 'medium' size) a small size (18 x 22 cm). The small arpilleras typically show two houses, two trees, and one scene (for example, women selling vegetables at a stall, or children dancing). The elements within them are generally symmetrically arranged, and the same themes reappear in exactly the same form. As Graburn (1976) suggests, miniaturisation is accompanied by simplification of form and decoration. The Vicaría

created this size as a way of meeting the needs of customers seeking cheap crafts, and so as to lower the unit cost of production and increase output. This change supports

Graburn's (1976) observation that once the art becomes commercial, makers always keep an eye on low unit cost (because they must compete with each other and with imported souvenirs), 'leading to small sizes, easily stored, transported or bought in number by visitors for gifts'. The smallest arpilleras fit what Graburn (1976) identifies as the buyers' need for souvenirs: that they be cheap, portable, understandable, and dustable.

In the Nineties the arpilleras were not only of the wall-hanging type. The Vicaría also ordered many arpillera cards (a tiny arpillera stuck onto card), and 'arpillera objects' (bags, purses, aprons, document-holders, etc.).



Different arpillera objects: glasses cases, purses and bags

The evolution of the arpillera between 1974 and 1996, therefore, suggests that when people who have been affected by traumatic events come together to create something, the objects created describe the events figuratively, expressing personal experience and denunciation and often pointing at the guilty party. Over time the creations begin to refer to the experiences in more conceptual and less personal terms. Later still, the work becomes less personal, more standardised, more obviously concerned with mastery of technique, and more commercial. The shift is akin to Becker's (1988: 288) model of art becoming craft: 'The originally expressive art works and styles become

increasingly more organized, constrained and ritualized; organizational forms subordinate the artist increasingly to partial or entirely extraneous sources of control'.

The Arpilleras of the Agrupación

Like the arpilleras of the shantytown women, those of the Agrupación have evolved over time. What follows is a description of that evolution. The original arpilleras of the Agrupación were personal and denunciatory in tone and focused on the arpilleristas' personal disappearance story and search. Over time the denunciations were less about women's personal experiences and more general and conceptual, focusing instead on human rights. Later still, they focused on the demands of the Agrupación in the Nineties: truth and justice.

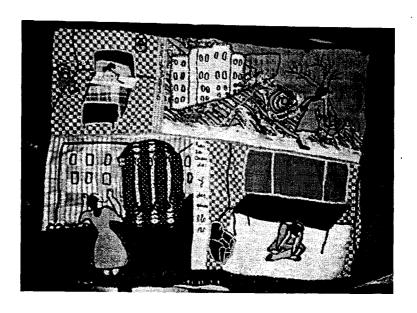
1974-1978

Between 1974 and 1978 the arpilleristas were overwhelmed by their experience of the disappearance of their relative and the consequences of this for themselves and their families. The Vicaría employees encouraged them, as a means of therapy, to relate the recent events of their lives in the arpilleras. The arpilleras of this period tell the story of the arrest of the relative, and the reactions of the woman to the loss. Frequently occurring images include receiving the news that the relative had disappeared, going to prisons and

government offices to find out where the loved one might be, sharing scraps of news with other women and sitting lonely at home.



A mural depicting the 'Via Crucis' of the relatives of the disappeared; the disappearance, search, international solidarity, and hope



A woman searching for her disappeared and experiencing grief and despair (detail of the Via Crucis)

As Irma describes:

'I showed a shattered house, a destroyed building, a broken home, as my home has been since the disappearance of my son and daughter-in-law'. (Irma Muller, quoted in Agosin 1988: 71)

Often the arpilleristas include a written message in a tiny pocket at the back of the arpillera, explaining that a son or husband had disappeared, with the date. These arpilleras are simultaneously personal and public, in that they denounce the violence of the government. Rowe and Schelling (1993: 187) draw an interesting link between the arpilleras and other forms of denunciation which the women used: 'What these forms of collective action and the *arpilleras* have in common is their use of personal metaphors to counter the aggression of the state: photographs of the disappeared which highlight the fact of absence or death; human chains to denote the power and importance of

interconnection; fragments of coloured cloth sewn together by the delicate movement of the hand'.

The arpilleristas often emphasise the social meaning of a figure, animal or object rather than rendering what it looks like. In the Agrupación's mural, for example, the telephone is particularly large in relation to the person who answers it because of the crucial nature of the news that it has borne or might bear about the disappeared person.



The telephone takes on huge proportions as the mother of a disappeared person receives the news of her son's disappearance

Like the art of some tribal peoples, it is the social attribution of some objects and social relationships between the members of the group and their physical and social

environments that is emphasised. As Carter (1990: 83-84), in his introduction to the sociology of art suggests: 'Proportion in such contexts means social proportion'.

1978-1989

Between 1978 and 1989 the arpilleristas depict their traumatic and personal experiences on a conceptual level rather than as they occurred as events. Many refer to the violation of human rights.



Arpillera stating: 'Every human being has the right to freedom of speech, thought and religion'

Others refer to the right to return to the homeland for exiled Chileans or the right to be judged before being exiled. Some arpilleras refer to injustice. One shows women bent over a coffin saying 'Victims of the Terror' with a crying Christ figure on the left, and the text: 'Why are there governments which are happy whilst they make God cry?'. Still others refer to freedom (by showing, for example, a man walking along a road accompanied by the text 'Man in search of his freedom'). The arpilleras of this period suggest an indignation with political repression, as well as personal suffering. The arpilleristas have developed a level of political consciousness which enables them to conceive of the events which befell them in abstract terms (see Chapter 6). By the same token they, like the shantytown arpilleristas, began to depict the problems of other groups:

'And that it was not just a problem of the detained and disappeared, I mean, we could not be selfish, only denouncing our own problem. And we had to denounce that in Chile all these [numerous other] violations of human rights were occurring'. (Violeta Morales)

During this phase the arpilleras also depict the state of the economy: the opening up of frontiers to foreign goods, the switch to an export economy, the privatisation of education and the gap between rich and poor (shown in one instance by means of a divided arpillera with, on top, a plump man eating, and below two small figures in despair with no food).



The turn to an export economy: Chile is 'on sale'

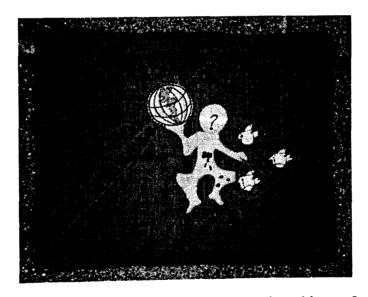
They are satirical in tone, showing, for example, bags of money with wings, leaving the country, or bags of food with wings, indicating sky-high inflationary prices



Food becomes unaffordable as its price rises

This satirical turn suggests that the women have begun to analyse the structural causes behind their experiences of hunger and deprivation.

In contrast to the previous period, where the arpilleristas use primarily literal description, during this second stage, they express themselves in more abstract terms. For example, whereas in the first phase solidarity might be shown by illustrating a church, inside of which people help performing collective tasks like cooking, or bring food, (an event the arpilleristas experienced directly), in this second stage the arpilleristas depict solidarity via a figure holding a globe, together with the words 'International Solidarity'.



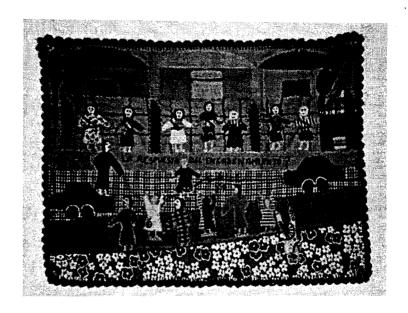
International solidarity and peace are the subjects of this arpillera

The arpilleristas of this stage also use symbols extensively. The dictatorship is portrayed as a monster, the Junta as four black bats, and the people as doves, for example. Yellow, and the sun, came to symbolise hope. All the arpilleristas of the group understood the symbols and were able to enumerate a number during a group interview. The arpilleras are like the tribal art described by Carter (1990: 84): 'Tribal art is dominated by a *collectively held* set of symbols...'. Likewise, the buyers possessed a collective understanding of the symbols and could 'read' the arpilleras. The arpillera conventions circulate amongst its makers and consumers and mark both as belonging to a group with shared values (see Chapter 4).

Many arpilleras do continue to depict events as they occurred, however. The Agrupación's own acts of protest feature prominently. These include the chainings to the gates of the Congress building, hunger strikes in churches and walking in the street holding up placards with photographs of the disappeared.



Arpillera of street protest in which the relatives hold photos of their disappeared and a small banner saying 'Where are they?'



Photograph of chaining to the gates of the Congress building. A banner asks: 'What is the answer to the chaining?'



Detail of chaining

During this period, as in the first period, the arpilleras showed little concern for technical virtuosity, detail or naturalism. Often the drama does not take place in a naturalistic setting, buildings are not shown in any detail, and there is no grass by the streets. The figures are not three-dimensional but flat and somewhat elongated. The arpilleristas only include the elements which are essential to the narrative or concept. For example, they signify women by dresses and men by trousers. The materials used are the basic ones required to tell the story: cloth and thread. The aim of these arpilleras is to communicate a message, not to provide detailed, naturalistic information or a decorative image.

1989-1996

In the late Eighties and Nineties a very common theme is: 'Dónde Están?' or 'Where are they?', referring to their disappeared relative. The arpilleras typically depict people holding up placards with the words, and a photo of the disappeared person. This image is inspired by the marches of the relatives.



Detail of protest with people holding sheets of paper saying 'Where is my daughter?' 'Where is my wife?' and 'Where are they?'

A number of arpilleras show only the hands and placards.