

The energetic Doña Lucía



Pinochet's widow died at the age of 99. Photo: Radio Universidad de Chile

By Roberto Morejón

Lucía Hiriart, powerful widow of former dictator Augusto Pinochet, leaves with her death an inevitable bitter memory of the dark passage inscribed by her husband in Chile's history, and of which nostalgic people still see her face.

Called by many 'Doña María', she is described by her harsh personality, demonstrated at the dawn of the coup d'état against the democratically elected President Salvador Allende.

The tyrant wrote in his memoirs that his wife urged him NOT to abandon the leaders of the Air Force and Navy, who colluded in the coup that crystallized on September 11, 1973.

Forty-eight years after the bloody coup that preceded a dictatorship that resulted in 3,000 murders and 40,000 disappeared, many Chileans have NOT been able to erase the stigma of that eventful period.

Pinochet imposed on the country his military approach, repression and savage neoliberalism, still present in the southern country, with its lacerating imprint of inequalities.

With a Magna Carta inherited from that ignominious phase, Chileans are waiting for a Constituent Assembly to return to the country a Law of Laws in accordance with democracy.

This is how dense is the inheritance of the former coup commander, whose wife, Lucia Hiriart, did NOT remain aloof from his performance.

According to testimonies, during the dictatorship, Doña Lucia directed the Center of Mothers of Chile, an allegedly non-profit entity, used to do private business.

With a generosity NOT exhibited when dealing with his opponents, Pinochet transferred to his partner more than 230 properties for the execution of his plans.

This led to her later being involved in trials on charges of embezzlement, although she was never convicted, hence citizens claim that Pinochet and his widow said goodbye with impunity.

As astonishing as it may seem to many, people who refuse to condemn Pinochet's regime still appear in public life.

Pinochet's widow died three days before an election marked by the presence of two contenders of opposing ideas, the former student leader Gabriel Boric, and the far-right José Antonio Kast, accused by his critics of promoting a hand as hard as in the phase of repression governed by Doña Lucia's husband.

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