

Pinochet's role in the disappearance of William Beausire

An interview with Juana Francisca Beausire

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Juana Francisca Beausire is the sister of William Beausire, the 26-year-old Anglo-Chilean businessman who was arrested and disappeared in Chile during the rule of former dictator General Augusto Pinochet.

William's arrest was aimed against his sister Mary Ann, a member of MIR (Movement of Revolutionary Left) and her partner, Andres Pasa! Allende, a nephew of Salvador Allende, the Chilean president deposed and killed during Pinochet's 1973 coup. When Mary Ann and Andres went into hiding, Pinochet's regime seized William in order to force a confession about their whereabouts. After eight months of horrific torture he disappeared. The Beausire's mother, Ines, was also arrested and another sister raped and tortured. Ines Beausire died in 1995.

Juana Francisca spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site*.

"My brother was arrested on November 2, 1974 by the Argentinean police. He was travelling to Europe and stopped in Buenos Aires. He was detained by the police, who shut him in a bathroom for several days. They then handed him over to the Chilean secret police, the DINA, who took him back to Chile.

"We know what then happened to him because many of those who were imprisoned with him—some of whom are now free—have stated that they saw him in several torture centres. The last time anybody saw him alive was on July 2, 1975 in a torture centre called 'the discotheque'. After then, he was never seen again.

"A lot of people saw him and spoke to him during that time. They have been telling us his history. That is what they used to do—tell each other their experiences so that if any of them came out of it alive they could give testimony to the story of others.

"My sisters and I, as well as my mother when she was alive, have contacted as many of these people as

possible to piece together exactly what happened to William. It is only in this way that we have been able to establish the facts. The terrible tales of torture and inhuman treatment have been very difficult for us, but it was the only way we could get to know something.

"William spent some time in the DINA centre in Calle Jose Domingo Canas and the notorious Villa Grimaldi. He was beaten, kicked and regularly given electric shocks on the Parrilla, a two-tiered bed of wire mesh covered with plastic. Electrodes were connected to his nipples, genitals and eyelids. He was subjected to other techniques such as the 'dry submarine', keeping a plastic bag over a prisoner's head to within moments of suffocation. These methods of torture weren't just used on my brother. This was done to everyone.

"William was last seen at the DINA centre in Macul, a district of Santiago used by the secret police as a recuperation centre. As with all the disappeared, nobody knows how they ended up or where their remains are.

"My mother and another sister were also imprisoned, and they heard William's voice in one of the places they were taken to. They were both in a very big room with many other prisoners. They had not been in this room very long when the people in charge started calling out names. One of them was my brother's. A prisoner said: 'No, they took him away a while ago.' After that my mother and sister called out to the next room and my brother answered. They immediately recognised his voice. After that they never saw or heard him again.

"My sister Mary Ann stayed in Chile with her partner Andres to continue the resistance. In 1975 the police discovered them and there was a big confrontation. They took refuge in the Costa Rican Embassy from which they left as exiles. My sister later returned. She

now lives in Chile, although she and Andres have since separated.

“What happened to Allende’s government was terrible. It is such a shame that the coup succeeded. Pinochet says that he did it to save Chile from Marxism, which he says would have ended freedom. He says that his government returned the country to democracy, and so on. But those who lived in Chile, and those outside of it, knew that Allende’s was a democratic government, so democratic that perhaps that is why they were able to carry out the coup so easily. The right wing tried to frighten people with horror stories that the government was going to steal their children, separate them from their mothers, and so on.

“People had so much hope and illusions in Allende’s government. They were so happy that things were going to change. Yet it all came down with a crash. Nobody expected the coup to happen, they thought such things could not happen in Chile. There was no war as such. The people involved in persecutions, tortures, were people in government and in the intelligence bodies created by Pinochet. He created the DINA, and they were specially trained for that purpose.

“Whatever happens, even if they return Pinochet to Chile, nothing will ever be the same again. Things will change. People will start protesting and demanding that some kind of justice be done. Something will have to be done. Things cannot just go back to what they were before.

“Generally people in Chile are still frightened because Pinochet is still there. Everything is the same. The torturers are free, and the same people who were active during Pinochet’s dictatorship are still there. People are still afraid to express their opinions, to start fighting. But the support shown by the whole world will strengthen them. They’ll feel more confident to start raising things. On the other hand it has weakened the right wing. Perhaps they will have to start thinking themselves. But I think that while Pinochet is still there, with all his people, the situation is not going to change. What happened has to be discussed.

“Pinochet is an assassin. I don’t know why they had to do what they did. In a war people die, but there is no war in the world that can justify torturing people like that, or making them ‘disappear’. It is incredible that even now people can continue defending him.

“The American government backed the coup, and

still today they do what they like in the world. But I think that the American people are different and I hope they are beginning to change. They are beginning to find out what is happening in the world.”



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