

TRANSCRIPT OF ORLANDO LETELIER'S REMARKS AT THE FELT FORUM, MADISON SQUARE  
GARDEN ON SEPTEMBER 10, 1976

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Dear Friends of Chile, dear friends of the true Chile:

In the name of our dead ones; in the name of more than one hundred thousand Chileans that have been put in the jails and concentration camps of the military dictatorship; of the thousands and thousands that have suffered brutal torture; of the families of those who have disappeared murdered by the secret police; of the more than 200,000 Chileans who have been expelled from their country and now live in exile; of the millions of Chileans who have no jobs and who are starving under the criminal economic policy of the fascist Junta; in the name of those who in Chile and abroad resist fascism and struggle for the restoration of democracy in our country, I bring here a message of gratitude to all of you.

From the very moment that a group of generals, serving the most reactionary economic groups, decided three years ago to declare war against the Chilean people and to occupy our country, an impressive worldwide movement of solidarity with the Chilean people has emerged. This vast solidarity movement has expressed, from the most diverse ideological and political perspectives, the repulsion of the civilized world for the barbaric and brutal violation of all human rights by the Chilean military junta. During the past three years the international support to the Chilean people by governments, political parties, churches, international organizations, humanitarian institutions, and persons of good will, has saved countless number of lives, and has liberated hundreds of political prisoners from the hands of the most repressive regime the world has known since the destruction of fascism and nazism in Europe.

This concert is a new demonstration of the fraternal reaction that the suffering of the Chilean people has brought about all over the world



In this gathering tonight there are many Chileans and Americans who have suffered imprisonment by the Chilean military dictatorship; there are many whose sons and daughters have been murdered by the Chilean fascists; If we were liberated it was because of the international pressure on the military junta; it was because of your support and your efforts for the restoration of Human Rights in Chile.

We have tonight with us several ambassadors and representatives of governments from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. We are particularly pleased to have with us Ambassador Dinh Ba Thi, permanent observer to the United Nations, of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. To all of them our appreciation.

We also have here members of the National Council of Churches of the United States; representatives of the United Auto Workers, and several other labor unions; many community leaders, particularly of the black, Puerto Rican and Chicano people; and representatives of Amnesty International, that has played such an important role in obtaining the freedom of hundreds of Chilean political prisoners.

Today Pinochet has signed a decree in which it is said that I am deprived of my nationality. This is an important day for me. A dramatic day in my life in which the action of the fascist generals against me makes me feel more Chilean than ever. Because we are the true Chileans, in the tradition of O'Higgins, Balmaceda, Allende, Neruda, Gabriela Mistral, Claudio Arrau and Victor Jara, and they - the fascists - are the enemies of Chile, the traitors who are selling our country to foreign interests. I was born a Chilean, I am a Chilean and I will die a Chilean. They were born traitors, they live as traitors and they will be known forever as fascist traitors.

Tonight the popular music of Chile and the United States are brought together in the songs of Aparcoa, one of the most authentic



expressions of Chilean folklore; the art of Pete Seeger, the great singer of freedom, and the music of Joan Baez, one of the most extraordinary artistic expressions that this country has given to the world.

Precisely two years ago I was released from a Chilean concentration camp and expelled to Venezuela. The day I arrived in Caracas, Joan Baez was giving a concert in the biggest stadium of that city, and she dedicated her songs to the struggle and suffering of the Chilean people. This was my first contact with the expressions of solidarity which I knew existed, but I had not yet witnessed. There, in that Venezuelan stadium, was this extraordinary woman with her guitar, with her voice full of emotion and feeling, bringing her message of human solidarity with the Chilean people to thousands of Venezuelans.

Tonight she is with us again and on behalf of the people of my country, I want to express to her our admiration and deep gratitude.

Three years ago, Salvador Allende died defending democracy, our Constitution and the conquests of the Chilean people in their struggle for dignity, freedom and socialism. We are not here today only to commemorate the death of a great hero of our country, but also to project his message into the future.

The military junta is today totally isolated internally and almost completely isolated from an international point of view. At least 80% of the Chilean population is against the Junta and different forms of resistance express themselves every day in spite of the terror and repression. The political parties, the labor unions, the churches, the student movement, the neighborhood organizations, are developing different forms of struggle against the dictatorship. The number of underground periodicals is constantly increasing. Today there are ten clandestine newspapers which



manage to reach and involve increasing number of Chileans in the struggle.

The international isolation of the Chilean dictatorship was shown during the last UN General Assembly when 95 countries condemned the Junta for its permanent violations of all human rights. In its desperate reaction to universal condemnation the Chilean fascists have designed a new method to prevent pressure from outside for the liberation of political prisoners. People are now being detained and disappear without leaving a trace in such a way so as to evade the responsibility and frustrate international concern. More than 2,000 Chileans have disappeared in the hands of DINA, Pinochet's private secret police, and the cornerstone of his regime. Those concerned with human rights in Chile, realize now that efforts to liberate political prisoners, important as they are, may not be enough, because DINA detains every day a number of people which is always greater than the number of persons that are released. The struggle for human rights must also concentrate in the destruction of the repressive apparatus built by the dictatorship.

The solidarity of the American people in favor of the restoration of human rights and democracy in Chile must continue to grow.. This solidarity is paramount to us. We will never rest until we achieve the overthrow of the fascist regime in Chile. At that time, when we shall be building a new democracy, we will be counting on your support to uphold the hard fought conquests of the Chilean people and to stop once and for all the reactionary forces that from within Chile and from abroad destroyed our democracy.

The words of Salvador Allende have a stronger meaning now than ever before. In the final moments of his epic fight he said: "I have faith in Chile and her destiny. Other men will overcome this dark and bitter moment where treason imposed itself. May you continue to know that much sooner than later, great avenues will open through which, free men will pass to build a better society."

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.