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RUE SANTA FE

UN FILM DE CARMEN CASTILLO



CALLE SANTA FE

A FILM BY CARMEN CASTILLO

2007 • Chile
Film Format : 35 MM / 1:1.85 • Audio Format: Dolby SR
Running time : 2H40

International Press

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Synopsis

October 5, 1974. Chile. Calle Santa Fe, in the Santiago suburbs. Carmen Castillo, 6 months pregnant, is badly injured and her partner Miguel Enriquez, head of the resistance against Pinochet's dictatorship, is killed in combat.

So begins **Calle Santa Fe**, a journey into the memories of the defeated, a journey undertaken without self-indulgence or complacency; a narrative driven by the question: Were these acts of resistance worth their terrible cost? Did Miguel die in vain?

Through the lives, faces and voices of his family, his neighbours, his comrades in arms, director Carmen Castillo follows a path that leads from the underground into exile, from the glory days of Allende through the long, black years of dictatorship, accompanied by those who resisted and resist still.

Between the chaos of the past and the undimmed emotions of today the story of a revolutionary generation and a broken country emerges.

Calle Santa Fe depicts the quest for the meaning of these lives of struggle, leading us into the heart of a land eager to forget; a land where the dead are never truly dead and the fight against injustice continues.

Interview with Carmen Castillo

You were expelled from Chile in November 1974. You were a militant for the resistance, and the companion of Miguel Enriquez, leader of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), who was assassinated. Today, you are directing a film that retells those dramatic events.

In the report you directed in December 1974 for Dutch television, I said: *"We lived a normal life in our house on Calle Santa Fe. That day, we were surrounded by the Dina (Pinochet's secret service) and the military, 500 of them. Miguel resisted for two hours, alone... And he was killed in combat. We were ordinary people faced with an extraordinary situation. Miguel Enriquez was not a victim, nor a hero, but a man who fought."*

Calle Santa Fe tells the same story, but, since the light has changed, different shadows are cast. During your interview that day, I was ignoring an essential question: Why did I survive? I knew that Miguel hid me behind some furniture, that he protected me, that he spoke to me... Then, silence. Thirty years later, returning with a camera to Calle Santa Fe, to the house where we lived in secret, I find that nothing has changed in this crowded neighbourhood, especially the inhabitants. They remember. I finally found out who dared take me in their arms, despite the bullets, despite the military, who took me in an ambulance to a hospital emergency room. Manuel, our neighbour, a worker, saved my life. He simply said: *"It was the normal thing to do."* He also told me: *"I saw Miguel go all the way to the corner of this street, then come back to the house. At that point in the fight, he could have fled, and saved his life, but he came back. He did not abandon you."*

Why is it so important to find out the truth behind the battle of Calle Santa Fe?

I think that we never understand how it can be possible to survive the loss of a great love, how to carry on in its absence. However, my memory of what happened has gone from horror and evil to good. For a long time, I considered Chile to be full of nothing but fascists. Even though I knew that there was still humanity to be found among the prisoners in the torture chambers and in the camps, I maintained this perception of evil and fear. Thanks to Manuel, I also remembered 'good deeds.' This was a turning point in my relationship with the country and it helped me discover the joy of reconnecting with the people. When I returned to Calle Santa Fe it was like coming back to a place where a life had been broken. But I finally understood this way of being, of fighting, of a people who'd never been considered, whose opinion regarding the dictatorship had always been ignored. This also enabled me to be able to leave Calle Santa Fe, to go elsewhere, to the homes of the surviving

militants, my friends. The burning question was: Was it worth it? Did Miguel and the others die for nothing? It is their memories, their words and their lives that move the story forward. From a film centered around a personal story, I move to a choral film, one that echoes the voices of a generation of revolutionaries.

In Europe, the fight in Chile was a symbol of resistance against fascism, as was the fight against Nazism.

Expelled from Chile and a political refugee, I finally settled in France because of that immediate fraternal bond, that of the fight against fascism. Those who resisted Nazism in Europe lived as we did, exactly as it is told by the militants in the film, in secrecy, in an unequal armed fight, facing torture, death, risk and isolation from our children. But there was also solidarity, happiness, friendship. High and low, they were motivated by their convictions and the certitude of victory. I have shared our experience with friends whom I met in exile and women resistants from the time of the war. They also helped me to get over the loss and to take on a leadership role in the unyielding reconsideration of these issues of violence. In this way I was able to move beyond being defined as the 'widow of a hero.'

In what way does the movement in Chile today resemble MIR, your revolutionary movement under Allende?

Simply in as much as it wants a more just society, where the poor have a right to a dignified life. In the 80s, the open resistance against the dictatorship was born and grew in the *poblaciones* - organized poor neighbourhoods. Paradoxically, the arrival of democracy in 1990 marked the decline of these popular organizations that were pushing Pinochet out. Today, the decay of these bonds has turned these areas into arenas for drug traffickers. Nonetheless the youth, our children, who are always a minority, play a fundamental role in awakening peoples' conscience and desire to act. Yes, I found Miguel there. And I found men and women like us, with the same 'insolence', iconoclasts who chose to live 'in the field', as we say today, who work and live in the *poblaciones*, who take action and who think about how they can organize and conduct politics today. In a society without public education, you have to do everything, invent everything, use the local television stations, the internet, create social centres, nursery schools, hip hop workshops, orchestral symphonies, theatres... It is because I met them over the course of the two years that I was shooting the film that the film shows the present, and remembers the past in the present. *"As long as we are alive, our dead are not dead."*

The Latin American dictatorships were all defeated. What memory do you want to share with the new generation of today?

The continent is moving towards greater freedom and social justice. But despite the victory of Michèle Bachelet during the elections - a woman who was tortured, exiled and whose father was assassinated - Chile remains the ultraliberal laboratory of the world. So, over there, understanding our history is a complicated task. Words like engagement, resistance, solidarity and social justice fall by the wayside. The dominant thinking has us stuck in a past that is perceived as outmoded, where we are frustrated and bitter. They can't understand that our memories also includes moments of joy, and especially those experienced in the collective struggle, day after day, to change to fatal course of things.

My film is not a commemoration of Miguel, nor of the MIR, nor of the reasons we fought: it is a lucid and ferocious reflection on political struggle and the price one pays for it. **Calle Santa Fe** enabled me to leave the camp of the survivors, and to rediscover the passion of living in Chile. Throughout the film, I try to buy the house on Calle Santa Fe in which I lived with Miguel. The deeper I go into the rediscovery of our story, in the meetings with militants, seeing the life they live today with today's youth, the more I am persuaded by what they say: "*Why this house? Miguel isn't a museum piece and neither are you. Come with us, write books and make movies.*" That is what I am trying to do.

**Taken from elements collected by director
Ludi Boeken**

From an article that appeared in "Libération",
July 22, 2006

*« Une réflexion sur le Chili, l'engagement politique et
le prix à payé »
("Reflections on Chile, political struggle and the price
to pay")*

Carmen Castillo - Biography

Historian and film maker Carmen Castillo was born in Santiago in Chile. In 1970, while a militant in the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), she worked at La Moneda, alongside President Salvador Allende. After the military coup of September 11th, 1973, she went underground with Miguel Enriquez, her companion and head of the Resistance, and their 4-year-old daughters. On October 5th 1974, their safehouse on Calle Santa Fe was besieged by the military and Miguel killed in combat. Carmen, pregnant and wounded, was imprisoned, then expelled from the country.

As a refugee in France, she worked with Agnès b., wrote, and directed documentary films for television. In 1990, even at the end of the dictatorship, Chile remained a hostile, 'foreign' place for Carmen. Since beginning work on the film **Calle Santa Fe** in 2002, she has divided her time between Paris and Santiago.

Selected Filmography

Television Documentaries

- 1984 ETAT DE GUERRE : NICARAGUA
(STATE OF WAR : NICARAGUA)
co-directed with Sylvie Blum
- 1993 LA FLACA ALEJANDRA
author, directed by Guy Girard
- 1995 LA VERIDIQUE LEGENDE DU SOUS-COMMANDANT MARCOS
(THE TRUE LEGEND OF SUB-COMMANDER MARCOS)
- 1999 LE BOLERO, UNE EDUCATION AMOUREUSE
(LE BOLERO, A LOVING EDUCATION)
- 2000 MARIA FELIX, L'INSAISSABLE
(THE INTANGIBLE MARIA FELIX)
- 2002 L'ASTRONOME ET L'INDIEN
(THE ASTRONOMER AND THE INDIAN)
co-directed with Sylvie Blum
- 2003 JOSE SARAMAGO, LE TEMPS D'UNE MEMOIRE
(JOSE SARAMAGO : THE LENGTH OF A MEMOIR)
- 2004 LE CHILI DE MON PERE
(MY FATHER'S CHILE)

Chronology • Chile 1970 / 2004

1965 - The creation of the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left).

September 4th 1970 - Salvador Allende wins the presidential elections and becomes the first socialist president. The MIR rally voters for Allende and organize the GAP ('Group of personal friends'), to ensure Allende's voter confidence during the elections. The MIR announces the importance of its role in the elections to the Popular Union and, riding the wave of social organisation sweeping through Latin America, grows in stature, while developing real popular power.

September 11th 1973 - Pinochet's military coup d'état. Massive looting, torture and disappearances. Social syndicates and organizations are destroyed. The MIR goes underground, prohibits political asylum and attempts to organize an allied resistance.

November 1973 - The dictatorship creates DINA, a sort of Chilean 'Gestapo' whose primary aim is the eradication of the MIR. Their methods include forced disappearances of prisoners and the construction and widespread use of underground torture chambers.

October 5th 1974 - The death of Miguel Enriquez, head of the MIR and the underground resistance. Soon after, Carmen Castillo is expelled from the country.

1978 - Political agitation for the return of underground MIR militants.

1980 - Birth of the "protestas", a powerful, overground movement for social resistance. From the 'poblaciones', bastions of rebellion, a new generation of MIR militants emerges. This sizeable social movement succeeds, among other things, in leading the victory of "No To Pinochet" during the 1989 referendum.

1985 - Division of MIR.

1989 - The MIR is dissolved by its own committee.

1990 - Democracy returns. A slow constitutional transition begins in the conceptual framework of the dictatorship.

September 2004 - End of Augusto Pinochet's immunity.

October 5th 2004 - In Santiago, Valparaiso and Temuco, the arrival of a new generation of resisters is made apparent during a series of tributes to the 30-year anniversary of the death of Miguel Enriquez.

Credits

Director Carmen Castillo (Echeverria)

DPs

Ned Burgess / Raphaël O'Byrne
Sebastian Moreno / Arnaldo Rodriguez

Assistant camera Nina Bernfeld

Sound

Jean-Jacques Quinet / Damien Defays
Boris Herrera / Andrei Carrasco

Editor Eva Feigeles-Aimé

Mix Jean-Jacques Quinet

Grading Eric Salleron

Director of Production Sophie de Hijes

Post-production coordinator Sophie Vermersch

Production (INA) Christine Perrier

Executive producers Sergio Gandara / Serge Lalou

Original music Juan Carlos Zagal

a Parox - Sergio Gandara (Chile) • Les Films d'Ici -
Serge Lalou (France) • Les Films de la Passerelle -
Christine Pireaux (Belgium) • L'Institut National de
l'Audiovisuel (INA) - Christophe Barreyre et Sylvie
Blum (France) • Love Streams Agnès b. Productions -
Agnès b. and Nadja Romain (France)
co-production

With the amicable support of:

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Fondo de Fomento Audiovisual (Chile)

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