

Introduction to the English Edition From the Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation

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This report is the core of Chile's earnest response to a major ethical and political dilemma of our time. The problem may be summarized as follows: How can a country overcome a legacy of dictatorial rule and massive human rights violations if the new government is subject to significant institutional and political constraints? How, in those circumstances, can the equally necessary but often conflicting objectives of justice and social peace be harmonized? What are the moral tenets which should guide the politician's actions in such ambiguous situations?

Chile came to confront this dilemma after the inauguration of elected President Patricio Aylwin on March 11 of 1990, which put an end to more than sixteen years of military rule. By that time, several other countries in different regions of the world had been through a process of transition from dictatorship to democracy. Although Chile could learn from recent precedents, the sobering lesson they taught was that the political stakes involved in settling accounts with the past are extraordinarily high, that a fully satisfactory outcome can hardly be expected, and that the social tensions brought about by the legacy of human rights violations linger on for a long time.

Chile's solution was also, and inevitably, lacking. However, it was a serious, carefully thought-out policy which achieved salutary results within the country and significantly added to a wealth of relevant experiences from which other nations may draw. Indeed, since the time of the publication of this report in Chile, more countries have come to a similar political juncture and no doubt still others will.

This introduction attempts to explain the rationale and effects of the Aylwin administration's overall human rights policy, of which this report is a central component. The making of this policy was intensely deliberate. During the presidential campaign the coalition of parties from the center and center-left which supported the Aylwin candidacy set up a commission to prepare policy recommendations on human rights. Immediately after inauguration, President Aylwin engaged in consultations with human rights activists, relatives of victims of human rights violations, religious leaders, and representatives from a broad range of political parties.

Defining a policy involved first establishing ultimate objectives. These made themselves evident: to repair the damage caused by human rights violations both to individual victims and to the society as a whole; and to prevent such atrocities from ever happening again. The crux of the matter, however, was to decide on the means to achieve such objectives and on the likely extent to which they could be accomplished. These questions could not be answered in a void. At least four major considerations had to be duly weighted: the nature and extent of the human rights violations committed and the measure of investigation of the truth and justice for which they called; the restrictions imposed by the existing laws and institutions and by the likely reaction of the Chilean armed forces; the relevant experience of other countries; and the duties dictated by international human rights norms, as well as the position adopted on these issues by the international human rights community. An analysis of these factors is necessary to understand this report and the policy from which it stemmed.

On September 11 of 1973 the Chilean armed forces attacked La Moneda, the presidential palace in the center of Santiago. Within hours Chile's elected president, Salvador Allende, lay dead (this report concludes that he committed suicide), and a military junta presided by General Augusto Pinochet took power.

There followed an intense political repression which resulted in political killings and "disappearances," the imprisonment or exile of countless Chileans, and the widespread use of torture. These massive human rights violations shocked the world.

President Allende's three-year government and the more than sixteen years of dictatorial rule that followed it were the most turbulent chapters in Chile's history as an independent country. Chile had a long tradition of democratic institutions and respect for the rule of law. However, in the sixties a process of increasing political polarization, which is described in Part Two of this report, led to growing intolerance and divisions among different sectors of the Chilean society. During the Allende administration's tragically failed socialist experiment this polarization was sharply exacerbated. The 1973 *coup d'état* was the culmination of this process. Chileans were deeply divided about this outcome. Some considered it an inadmissible violent interruption of democratic rule; others believed it was an inevitable move to prevent an impending civil war.

Adamantly opposite views about the coup still persist, although most Chileans have come to agree to disagree on this issue. However, it is now widely acknowledged in Chile that a distinction must be made between the *coup d'état* and the human rights violations committed by the military regime. While the inevitability or admissibility of the former could be controvertible, there ought not be two opinions about the utter illegitimacy of the latter. Although the ethical basis of such a distinction is unequivocal, not many supporters of the regime

dared to speak out against human rights violations, at least during the most critical years of military rule.

Both in Chile and abroad, political killings, "disappearances," and torture came to be considered as the worst abuses of the military regime. It certainly committed many other human rights violations, including massive arbitrary imprisonment and exile, as well as attacks on other civil liberties. But, notwithstanding the seriousness of these transgressions, the facts were known and the military government did not deny them. Rather, it attempted to justify them on the grounds that the emergency the country faced permitted the suspension of certain individual rights. Concerning political assassinations and torture, however, there is no possibility of even attempting a justification under international law (whether human rights law or the laws of armed conflict) because the respective norms can never be subject to derogation or suspension. Consequently, those practices were always denied by the military government. These denials were largely believed by most of its civilian supporters (many of them probably preferred not to know for sure). They would accept the official explanations that nothing more than isolated, inevitable excesses could have occurred. At most they would believe that the real extent of the abuses was far less than what was reported by domestic and international human rights organizations and by the foreign press.

As is abundantly documented in this report, the method of "disappearances" was systematically applied during the first four years of military rule. Detention of the victims was not acknowledged. They were kept in clandestine detention, subjected to torture and eventually summarily executed. Their bodies were disposed of in secret. This report documents close to one thousand of such cases. During the first months of military rule these "disappearances" were not centrally coordinated. But with the establishment of DINA, the regime's secret police, toward the end of 1973, "disappearances" became a carefully organized method designed to exterminate opponents considered dangerous and to avoid accountability for such crimes.

The families of the executed prisoners were at least able to bury their dead. However, the relatives of the "disappeared" have endured for many years the cruel uncertainty about the fate of their loved ones, both mourning for them and hoping against all hope. They desperately needed to know the truth.

DINA was dissolved in 1977 and replaced by a new body, the CNI. The systematic resorting to "disappearances" ceased, but other human rights violations, including assassinations and torture, continued although at a lesser scale.

The military government always insisted that it had been waging a war, albeit an unorthodox one, against an insidious, subversive enemy. Yet under no accepted

definition of armed conflict could such an allegation be sustained. As established in this report, except for isolated acts of resistance on the day of the *coup d'état* and in its immediate aftermath, the military government exerted effective control over the country. It was able to suppress any opposition, whether peaceful or not, during the first seven years of its rule. Around 1980, however, as explained in this report, some opposition groups started an organized armed resistance. While they were never able to control territory or to wage military operations in a sustained manner, their actions gave a boost to the government's contention that it was fighting a war. These groups engaged in killings, most of which may be characterized as terrorist acts or, at any rate, as acts in violation of internationally accepted humanitarian principles. Ninety such killings are documented in this report.

Some opposition groups justified the resorting to armed resistance on the grounds that they were fighting a tyrannical government. The need and justification for armed rebellion could be a matter of controversy, as the *coup d'état* was (most of those who opposed the military regime, however, rejected either the legitimacy or the effectiveness of armed resistance). But, again, a distinction must be drawn between the reasons for resorting to arms and specific actions of the rebels that violate the laws of armed conflict or other basic principles of humanity.

These realities dictated that the human rights policy of the Aylwin government should focus, as a priority, on revealing the truth about the fatal victims of political violence: victims of assassinations and "disappearances" committed by agents of the government (the vast majority) but also political assassinations committed by rebel groups. The practice of torture by the government also had to be accounted for.

A second factor the Aylwin administration had to take into account was the set of institutional and political constraints it inherited. Among the most salient was an amnesty law decreed by the military government in 1978, following the dissolution of DINA. The effect of it was that, with the exception of one crime (the bomb assassination ordered by DINA of Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C., in September of 1976) all human rights violations committed prior to the date of that decree would remain in impunity. The worst and most systematic human rights violations perpetrated by the military government occurred in the period covered by the amnesty. Offenses committed after that date could legally be prosecuted. They included some egregious crimes. But most of them would be hard to prove in court without collaboration from the perpetrators or their comrades in arms.

The Chilean Supreme Court, which is sharply criticized in this report for failing to protect human rights, had upheld the validity of the 1978 amnesty decree. President Aylwin did not, of course, have constitutional powers to interfere with the Court's rulings. He could not hope for a repeal of this legislation either. In

effect, despite a broad victory in the presidential and congressional elections, the government coalition did not obtain a majority in the Senate due to a provision of the 1980 Constitution which reserved a number of seats for appointed rather than elected senators.

But even if it had been feasible to repeal the amnesty, the Aylwin administration would have had to calculate carefully the likely results of such a move. The 1980 Constitution, although amended prior to the presidential election, did retain other provisions which restricted the powers of the President. Chief among them was a norm securing tenure for the commanders of the armed forces, including General Pinochet, the head of the army, until 1997. The purpose of this provision was to maintain the institutional cohesiveness of the armed forces, which was a major feature throughout the years of military rule, during the initial (and, for the military, unpredictable) period of democratic restoration. The armed forces considered the amnesty and its effects as a settled affair and were most worried about the prospect of widespread prosecutions. They were convinced that in 1973 they had been the last institutional bastion which managed to save the country from drifting into communism. Their argument was that prosecutions would undermine their position, dangerously depriving the country from the safeguard they represented in case of a new drift towards socialism which could never be ruled out. Further, they felt they had, in an orderly fashion, returned an economically dynamic Chile to democratic rule and that any undesirable costs paled in significance. Thinly veiled warnings that the armed forces would not tolerate a repeal of the amnesty decree were repeatedly made before and after President Aylwin was inaugurated.

On the other hand, one of the planks of the coalition that supported Aylwin had been to seek the repeal of the 1978 amnesty. Short of that hardly attainable goal, the Aylwin government felt that at least it should request from the judiciary that the effects of that amnesty would not preclude judicial investigations of the fate of the disappeared prisoners, even if such investigations could not conclude in trial and punishment.

In fashioning its human rights policy, the Aylwin government also had to take into account the experience of other countries, the principles of international law, and the opinion of the international human rights community.

In Chile, the banner of human rights became the moral counterweight to the force of the military regime, throughout the years of dictatorship. Soon after the *coup d'état*, a coalition of churches led by the Catholic Church established the Committee for Peace, which as of 1976 became the Vicariate of Solidarity of the Catholic Archdiocese of Santiago. These successive organizations lent moral and legal assistance to thousands of victims of the political repression and to their families. They carefully documented every case which came to their attention and produced numerous and thorough reports on the overall human

rights situation in Chile. In parallel, international human rights bodies and organizations, both intergovernmental and non-governmental, focused intensely on the human rights situation in Chile from the onset of the military regime. So did the international press. All of them could rely on the information provided by the Peace Committee, the Vicariate of Solidarity, and other human rights groups which emerged in Chile in subsequent years.

Chile's rich and prolonged experience in the struggle to protect human rights had a remarkable influence in the realm of social values and public discourse. By the time Chile started its transition to democracy, human rights stood as the preeminent notion of political ethics. Chilean politicians who might once have invoked human rights mostly as a means to confront the military government's repressive drive, accepted in subsequent years the universal value of the idea and its place as a central tenet of a democratic system. Politicians who had supported the military regime came to admit openly that they should have paid more attention to the protection of human rights.

At the beginning of the military regime, the nascent human rights organizations in Chile were barely aware of the extent to which an international human rights movement had developed. But soon they become fully acquainted with the international human rights scene and could, in turn, contribute to the development of mechanisms for the protection of human rights at the United Nations or the OAS and to the work of international non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, and Americas Watch.

The Chilean case had received far greater international attention than would usually be given to a country of modest geopolitical importance. For years the United Nations and the OAS singled it out for special human rights monitoring. The case of Chile was better known to international public opinion than that of other countries suffering comparable or even worse repression. At the beginning of the military regime this could be explained by the fact that the *coup d'état* was in poignant contrast with the political tolerance which had come to be expected from Chile. Further, President Allende's experiment with a "peaceful road to socialism" had captured the imagination of sectors of international public opinion. His dramatic death in the governmental palace acquired the lasting power of a symbol.

However, the intense international focus on the human rights situation in Chile was subsequently sustained due to the work of Chilean human rights organizations. The Vicariate of Solidarity had succeeded in documenting the vast majority of all serious human rights violations committed by the military government. Chilean human rights organizations came to be widely considered by the international human rights community as among the most effective groups working within a context of dictatorship.

Given the international status achieved by the case of Chile and the strength of domestic human rights work, the international human rights community followed with great attention how Chile dealt with the legacy of the dictatorial past. This problem had been confronted by one country after another in the recent past. International human rights organizations were still drawing the lessons from these developments and adjusting their own policies.

The vocal, highly visible international human rights movement of today may be said to have started in the sixties. The issue of human rights had been formally in the world agenda since the creation of the United Nations. But although human rights treaties and the corresponding intergovernmental mechanisms are of central importance, it was not until the sixties that a worldwide movement began to be formed. It started at the international level with the creation of Amnesty International and other non-governmental organizations which channeled the activism of concerned citizens all over the world. Later on, domestic organizations were formed in many countries where there was a pattern of political repression.

Until the early eighties these international organizations dealt chiefly with human rights violations being at that time committed by governments. It could be assumed that it was within the power of those governments to continue or to stop such practices. Campaigning for their immediate cessation was thus not only based on clear norms and solid convictions – in addition, governments could not argue that it was beyond them to comply.

However, the positive duty of successor governments to dispense justice for past crimes is of a different nature than the negative obligation of refraining from committing them. These governments' power to comply fully with such a duty may not always be assumed. This problem became evident starting with the case of Argentina, after the downfall of the military regime and the election of President Alfonsín, in 1983.

Before that time, the thinking about dealing with State crimes was largely framed by the foremost precedent of our time: the Nüremberg and Tokyo trials. This precedent emphasized the duty, imposed by the conscience of humankind and by several international legal norms, to prosecute and punish certain crimes and the necessity of such measures in order to preserve the collective memory and to build up an effective deterrent. The role of human rights organizations would be to make sure that in the process of meting out justice the new government respected the rules of fair trial and other human rights norms.

However, the postwar model rested on a necessary material condition: the war criminals who were brought to trial did not lose power through political means but

through a complete military defeat. The victors did not have to wrestle with questions of correlation of forces.

Some of the salient cases of political transition before 1983 were not of a nature that would challenge the suitability of the post-Second World War model. For instance, in Nicaragua, in 1979, the Sandinistas won a decisive victory by the force of arms. Likewise, after the overthrow of the military regime in Greece, in 1974, the succeeding civilian government prosecuted many officials of the fallen regime. Argentinean President Alfonsín also prosecuted several of the top military rulers of the previous regime. However, just as it happened with Greece seven years before, the Argentinean military had recently been defeated in an international war outside the mainland. As a consequence they had lost authority and institutional cohesiveness. This factor facilitated the possibility of prosecutions in Argentina, although the military still controlled the weapons. Eventually they regained a measure of cohesiveness which permitted them to put strong pressure on the Alfonsín government to adopt measures of leniency.

After the Alfonsín government's ensuing difficulties and after the rapid succession of political transitions of subsequent years, in all regions of the world (from the Americas, to Eastern and Central Europe, to Africa) the whole array of complex ethical, legal, and political issues involved in the change from dictatorship to democracy became fully apparent. In most of these countries the successor governments did not come to power as a result of military victories but through tortuous political paths. The perpetrators and their supporters were still a force to be reckoned with. Often before they left power they managed to impose institutional and legal arrangements to limit the scope of action of the incoming government. In some cases there had been an internal armed conflict, but it ended in a negotiated peace, with no clear victor; or else, one of the parties did emerge victorious, but feared to antagonize the rival ethnic or national groups through widespread prosecutions, lest the conflict be reignited.

What are the principles to be applied in all such situations? What can they be fashioned from? This was a novel ethical dilemma, although many of the discrete issues encompassed by this problem have long received the attention of ethicists, jurists, or theologians. For instance, much literature on political ethics has been devoted to the relationship between ends and means in political life and also to the more specific issue of the extent to which politicians should be guided, in the pursuit of morally desirable ends, by the likely outcome of their actions. As to juridical sciences, criminal law theories have for a long time dealt with the social or moral value of penalties as a deterrent or as instruments of distributive justice. Further, since the jurisprudence of the Nüremberg Tribunal, United Nations resolutions and treaties have defined crimes against international law. These treaties include the obligations of States to prosecute certain crimes or to refrain from establishing limitations to their prosecution and punishment. Finally, legal theories, the domestic laws in most countries, and even certain

international treaties also refer to measures of clemency, including pardon and amnesties. But the richest depository of doctrines and reflections on mercy is to be found in the teachings of major religions about acknowledgment of wrongdoing and atonement, penance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

However, the sum of principles and theories concerning separate aspects of the problem was not sufficient. A unifying ethical approach was required which would permit the integration of principles and real-life constraints. This was provided by Max Weber's distinction between the ethics of ultimate ends (or ethics of conviction) and the ethics of responsibility, as developed in his famous lecture "Politics as a Vocation," dictated in München in 1919. Weber clarifies that an ethic of conviction does not imply lack of responsibility, just as an ethic of responsibility does not imply lack of convictions. Rather he stresses the fundamental difference that exists between acting according to an ethical precept regardless of the outcome and acting taking into account the predictable consequences of one's action.

In Weber's view politicians must always be guided by an ethic of responsibility. All the more so, it must be concluded, they should follow such a maxim in cases where the stakes for the whole of society are as great as they are in the types of situations just described. Political leaders ought not be moved only by their convictions, unmindful of real-life constraints, lest in the end the very ethical principles they wish to fulfill suffer because of a political or military backlash. However, it must also be firmly stated that neither can a politician invoke the need for prudence as an excuse for inaction and cowardice. Responsible politicians do not shy away from pursuing the fulfillment of basic ethical principles, even in dangerous circumstances. Rather, they assess carefully the circumstances so as to be able to attain the desired results to the fullest extent possible.

In retrospect, it is striking how much Weber's distinctions have inspired people who had to make relevant human rights policy decisions or recommendations in different countries and who, in all appearance, had no contact with each other. At roughly the same time, around 1990, President Aylwin, Czechoslovakia's President Vaclav Havel, and a number of human rights commentators were making express reference to the particular relevance of Weber's concept to situations of political transition.

In what concerned Chile, President Aylwin could draw from recent examples in Argentina and Uruguay. These countries were not only Chile's South American neighbors. Like Chile they had been ruled by military regimes, following a similar process of political polarization. Human rights violations in all three countries were of comparable gravity.

Argentina emphasized truth telling, through an official commission which produced a thorough report on disappearances. It also annulled an amnesty law passed by the military. But eventually the Alfonsín government felt compelled to back off from its initial stance and passed, under pressure, legislation to preclude further prosecutions. Uruguay emphasized forgiveness and some measures of reparation. There were neither prosecutions nor a thorough official report about the truth. This led many discontent citizens to organize a campaign of signature collection to put to a referendum the repeal of a law which precluded prosecutions. Although they lost the vote, the issue bitterly divided the Uruguayan society during the first years of democratic rule.

The lesson for the Aylwin administration was that it should stake out a policy it could sustain. Reparation and prevention were defined as the objectives of the policy. Truth and justice would be the primary means to achieve such objectives. The result, it was expected, would be to achieve a genuine reconciliation of the divided Chilean family and a lasting social peace.

The truth was considered as an absolute, unrenounceable value for many reasons: In order to provide for measures of reparation and prevention, it must be clearly known what it is that ought to be repaired and prevented. Further, society cannot simply black out a chapter of its history, however differently the facts may be interpreted. The void would be filled with lies or with conflicting versions. The unity of a nation depends on a shared identity, which, in turn, depends largely on a shared memory. The truth also brings a measure of social catharsis and helps to prevent the past from reoccurring. In addition, bringing the facts to light is, to some extent, a form of punishment, albeit mild, in that it provokes social censure against the perpetrators or the institutions or groups they belonged to. But although the truth cannot really in itself dispense justice, it does put an end to many a continued injustice – it does not bring the dead back to life, but it brings them out from silence; for the families of the "disappeared," the truth about their fate would mean, at last, the end to an anguishing, endless search. It was deemed further that a thorough disclosure of the truth was feasible, although probably the whereabouts of the remains of most disappeared will remain unknown.

Regarding justice, an important consideration was to assess the duties imposed by international law. The conclusion was that nations have discretion to decide democratically on measures of clemency, provided that such decisions are informed, namely that the truth about what is being amnestied is known. However, international law imposes on governments the duty always to investigate and punish certain particularly serious crimes. Whether some of the crimes amnestied in Chile, in particular the systematic practice of disappearances, fit the letter of those international norms may be a matter of technical controversy. But there was no doubt that they did fall at least within the spirit of international law. The position of the Aylwin administration was that

fulfilling the obligation to prosecute those crimes depended not only on the executive power, but on the legislature and the judiciary as well. If the executive could not, by itself, fulfill it, at least it would refrain from decreeing or proposing measures which would confirm or add to the existing situation of legal impunity.

Criminal justice would be effectively limited to cases committed after the 1978 amnesty and to the only pre-1978 crime exempted from the amnesty, the Letelier case. However, the government would insist in its view that the judiciary should at least investigate the fate of the disappeared prisoners, even if the cases were covered by the amnesty. In addition, other measures of justice, such as compensations and restitution of the victim's good name could be amply applied.

Based on these considerations, the Aylwin administration promised "the whole truth, and justice to the extent possible." Responsibility dictated that during the transition this was the most that could be aimed for. In fact, if the government had made an attempt (however futile, given Chile's existing legality) to expand the possibilities for prosecutions, most likely it would have provoked tensions and reactions resulting in that neither truth nor justice could be achieved.

The human rights policy, therefore, rested mainly on disclosing the truth. The government was conscious that for the truth to achieve the expected purposes it had to be established in a manner that elicited the respect of all Chileans. That is how President Aylwin came to appoint the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, a panel of eight people from across the political spectrum, which produced this report.

The reader will find abundant details in this report, particularly in its Parts One and Two, about how the Commission conducted its investigations, nationwide, and about the context within which the violations it investigated occurred. The Commission was also asked to make recommendations on reparations and on prevention. They are presented, in great detail, in Part Four. In the period since the publication and dissemination of this report many of the most important recommendations have been acted upon. Chief among them, the granting of a pension, by law, to the families of all the people listed by the Commission's report as victims and the establishment of an organization which could pursue the investigation of cases the Commission could not conclude and otherwise follow up on its work. Legal reforms also have been proposed, largely based on the Commission's recommendations.

The establishment of the Commission was strenuously objected to by the armed forces. However, in the end, they abided by the President's authority to do so and responded (mostly in form rather than in substance) to the Commission's many inquiries. Political parties which had also objected to the establishment of the Commission finally accepted its need and lent to it their cooperation.

On February 9 of 1991 the Commission delivered its report to the President. On March 4 in a televised address to the nation President Aylwin presented the findings of the Commission and, as the head of State, atoned for the crimes committed by its agents. The report was then widely disseminated. Congress passed a unanimous resolution commending it. All political parties acknowledged the truth of the facts investigated, although some disputed the historical interpretations contained in it. The army and the navy publicly rejected the report, focusing mostly on a historical interpretation of the Allende administration and the role of the military government. They did not deny the individual findings contained in the report. With the passing of time, there can be no doubt that the facts established in the report have come to be widely accepted in Chile as the truth.

The Commission named the victims but not the perpetrators. It mentions the branch of the armed forces or police responsible for the acts and even the specific unit, but it does not attribute guilt to individuals. However, it sent to the courts the incriminating evidence it could gather. The Commission was not a tribunal and was not conducting trials. To name culprits who had not defended themselves and were not obliged to do so would have been the moral equivalent to convicting someone without due process. This would have been in contradiction with the spirit, if not the letter, of the rule of law and human rights principles.

Based on the information channeled by the Commission, some courts reactivated judicial investigations of disappearances. Also a number of notorious political assassinations, including the Letelier case, have been brought to trial. In such cases the Commission's finding probably did not add substantially to the evidence gathered by the courts. But it is safe to say that the climate created by the establishment of the global truth may have encouraged some zealous judges to persist in the investigation of specific cases.

The reader will no doubt find that this report, although confined to the terms of its relatively narrow mandate and restrained in its style, does convey the cardinal ethical importance of the task undertaken. Indeed all those who participated in this endeavor, commissioners and staff alike, were deeply touched by this fact. They held widely different political persuasions but they all felt united by sincere adherence to human rights and by a strong awareness of the uniqueness of their civic mission. This is eloquently reflected in the fact that the report was unanimously approved.

Those who worked to produce this report became keenly aware of the cleansing power of the truth. Interviewing thousands of relatives of victims and other witnesses nationwide was a necessarily rigorous method. But, as the interviewers soon discovered, it was at the same time a means to heal the

wounds, one by one, and thus to contribute to the building of a lasting peace. They were also humbled by the generosity shown by the relatives of the victims they met. Certainly, many of them asked for justice. Hardly anyone, however, showed a desire for vengeance. Most of them stressed that in the end, what really mattered to them was to know the truth, that the memory of their loved ones would not be denigrated or forgotten, and that such terrible things would never happen again.