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by

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**Far away yet so close:
Carlos Ibáñez's exile in Argentina, 1931-1937**

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Report

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Abstract

Far away yet so close: Carlos Ibáñez's exile in Argentina, 1931-1937

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This paper will shed light on twice Chilean Presidente Carlos Ibáñez's life from the moment he left for exile after his first administration (1927-1931), until his return in 1937. With the notable exceptions, scholars have focused little attention on the period and Ibáñez himself. This research reconstructs Ibáñez's tortuous life during this period using mainly his personal archive and *memoirs* of politicians of the time, providing an unexpected understanding of Ibáñez himself and this period of Chilean history. What emerged from both Ibáñez's personal letters and those of others is that, even though he had fallen into apparent disgrace and even in spite of himself, Ibáñez continued to be a destabilizing force to the political system.

The first part deals with the problems that Ibáñez had to face after he left power, the failures of his political project, and the attacks on his former administration's achievements, until the overthrow of Juan Esteban Montero's government. The second part deals with the political turmoil of 1932, how Ibáñez tried to accommodate to the

political circumstances of the socialist republic, and how he tried to reposition himself in the political arena. A third section shows how Ibáñez resigned himself to the triumph of his fiercest political opponent, Arturo Alessandri, who won the 1932 presidential elections. He had to accept that he would be unable to return in the near future to Chile and he would have to rebuild a life in Buenos Aires. When after six complicated years Ibáñez returned to the country by mid-1937, he was more politically mature, and certainly more experienced.

Analysis of Ibáñez's exile suggests a new way of understanding Latin American politics. His absence from Chile played a fundamental role. Either out of fear or out of respect, the different political factions played with his "absence," making him a somehow invisible actor. Throughout, he worried about keeping up to date and staying in constant contact with many of the main actors and events of the Chilean politics. For his opponents and supporters, he was and still is a liminal figure for conceptualizing Chilean politics of the 1930's.

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FAR AWAY YET SO CLOSE: CARLOS IBÁÑEZ'S EXILE IN ARGENTINA, 1931-1937

Introduction

Some time during the during the 1930's, four Latin American ex- Presidents who had fallen into disgrace and were in exile gathered together to have lunch in Buenos Aires. They included coronel David Toro, of Bolivia; Jose P. Guggiari, of Paraguay; doctor Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra, of Ecuador; and, Carlos Ibáñez from Chile.¹ All of these men and their countries had suffered from the social, political, and economic effects of the Great Depression, a crisis that started with the collapse of the stock market in October 1929 in the United States.²

Between 1929 and 1932, Latin America would lose 65% of its trade. One result of this economic chaos was the multiplication of insurgencies and military coups throughout the continent. Capitalism's days seemed to be numbered as populist and leftist parties raised pledges of radical solutions for corrupted systems. Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil, would experience regime change through violence from 1930 to 1931. Venezuela's Congress in June 1931, once again called upon Juan Vicente Gómez to govern after the interim of Juan Bautista Pérez. Uruguay had its own upheavals shortly after, in 1933. Mexico's long

¹ Ernesto Würth Rojas, *Ibáñez, Caudillo Enigmático* (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1958). 201. Also, Gonzalo Vial Correa, *Historia De Chile (1891 - 1973)*, vol. V, De la república socialista al Frente Popular: (1931 - 1938) (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Santillana del Pacífico, 2001). 20

² Michael LaRosa and Germán Mejía P, *An Atlas and Survey of Latin American History* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007). 100

revolutionary process, begun in 1910, would only produce a stable government in the second half of the 1930s. Nicaragua was “saved” by the United States’ occupation from 1927 until 1933, an intrusive force that led to the anti imperialist campaign of Augusto C. Sandino. Only in Costa Rica and Colombia did social transformations occur through peaceful electoral means, though both countries experienced some measure of social unrest. This volatile climate of Latin America, would give rise to leaders like Getúlio Vargas, Juan Domingo Perón, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, and Jorge Ubico Castañeda.

In Chile, the weight of accumulated foreign debt and the growing political opposition would also lead to political unrest. When Ibáñez had assumed power in 1927, he had governed with the support of the traditional political parties and the armed forces. Nevertheless, in January 1931 he had assumed special powers to avoid becoming a victim of the international economic crisis brought by the collapse of the Chilean economy.³ Seven months later, a civil movement led by professionals and student organizations engaged in strikes demanding the resignation of the authorities. Ibáñez refused to send the army into the streets and believed it was better to step down from office.⁴

Even today General Carlos Ibáñez remains one of the most controversial presidents in twentieth-century Chilean politics. Elected for his first administration in 1927 with more than 90% of the votes, four years later he left power discredited. Historians have argued that there are two main arguments for his dramatic rise and fall:

³ Brian Loveman and Elizabeth Lira, eds., *Los Actos De La Dictadura Comisión Investigadora, 1931* (Santiago: Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana / Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos,2006). 7

⁴ Tobías Barros Ortiz, *Recuerdos Oportunos* (Santiago: Lathrop, 1938).

first, the effects of the world economic crisis as Chile's foreign sales dropped by more than 90%;⁵ and second, the political oppression used by his government. During Ibáñez's exile from 1931 until his return to the country in 1937, Arturo Alessandri's administration (1932-1938) accused Ibáñez of playing a destabilizing role in the constitutional order by taking part in every civil and military putsch to overthrow the government. Despite these charges, and just a couple of months after the government authorities lifted the restrictions barring his entrance to the country, part of Ibáñez's supporters proclaimed him a candidate for the presidential elections of 1938.

This paper will shed light on Ibáñez's life from the moment he left for exile until his return in 1937. With the notable exceptions of Donoso,⁶ Drake,⁷ Vial,⁸ and Fernandois,⁹ scholars have focused little attention on the period and Ibáñez himself. This research reconstructs Ibáñez's tortuous life during this period using mainly his personal archive and *memoirs* of politicians of the time. The personal correspondence found in the former allows us for the first time to retrace Ibáñez's steps during these years, providing an unexpected understanding of Ibáñez himself and this period of Chilean history. Although a number of memoirs appear in print, many remain underutilized because they are difficult to access. Aquiles Vergaras' memoirs are the best

⁵ Simon Collier and William F. Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 221

⁶ Ricardo Donoso Novoa, *Alessandri, Agitador Y Demoledor. Cincuenta Años De Historia Política De Chile*, 2 vols. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1953-1954).

⁷ Paul W. Drake, *Socialism and Populism in Chile: 1932-52* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

⁸ Vial Correa, *Historia De Chile (1891 - 1973)*.

⁹ Joaquín Fernandois H., *Abismo Y Cimiento: Gustavo Ross Y Las Relaciones Entre Chile Y Estados Unidos, 1932-1938* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 1997).

example. Published in Bolivia almost three decades after the events, the academy has paid little attention to them. What emerged from both Ibáñez's personal letters and those of others is that, even though he had fallen into apparent disgrace and even in spite of himself, Ibáñez continued to be a destabilizing force to the political system.

The Ibáñez's family archive constitutes an invaluable source for the period and Chilean history in general. It includes documents from his presidential campaigns of 1938 and 1942, his period as a senator (1949), and his second administration from 1952 until 1958. While it is possible to consult these sources, access to his archive remains restricted. His papers still leave many questions unanswered. However, the current paper explores Ibáñez's life and seeks more to understand this crucial period of Chilean history. The first part deals with the problems that Ibáñez had to face after he left power, the failures of his political project, and the attacks on his former administration's achievements, until the overthrow of Juan Esteban Montero's government. The second part deals with the political turmoil of 1932, how Ibáñez tried to accommodate to the political circumstances of the socialist republic, and how he tried to reposition himself in the political arena. A third section shows how Ibáñez resigned himself to the triumph of his fiercest political opponent, Arturo Alessandri, who won the 1932 presidential elections. He had to accept that he would be unable to return in the near future to Chile and he would have to rebuild a life in Buenos Aires. When after six complicated years Ibáñez returned to the country by mid-1937, he was more politically mature, and certainly more experienced.

Ibáñez's political career was far from over. As mentioned before, he would become the presidential candidate of the neo-fascist movement for the elections of 1938 (at the final moment he withdrew his candidacy, giving his support to the Popular Front).¹⁰ In 1942, a rightwing coalition supported him as its candidate, obtaining more than 43% of the electorate. Finally, in 1952 a multi-front right and left wing political movement took him once again to the presidency with more than 46% of the votes. Although his second presidency would not have the reformist impetus of his first administration, neither would it have the dictatorial character that had originally sentenced him to deportation.¹¹

Analysis of Ibáñez's exile suggests a new way of understanding Latin American politics. His absence from Chile played a fundamental role. Either out of fear or out of respect, the different political factions played with his "absence," making him a somehow invisible actor. Throughout, he worried about keeping up to date and staying in constant contact with many of the main actors and events of the Chilean politics. For his opponents and supporters, he was and still is a liminal figure for conceptualizing Chilean politics of the 1930's.

¹⁰ Marcus Klein, *La Matanza Del Seguro Obrero (5 De Septiembre De 1938)* (Santiago: Globo Editores, 2008). Regarding the Chilean Nazi movement, see Víctor Fariás, *Los Nazis En Chile*, 2 vols. (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 2000-2003).

¹¹ Ricardo Cruz-Coke, *Historia Electoral De Chile, 1925-1973* (Santiago: Editorial Jurídica, 1984).

1. *Under an unwanted and tainted inheritance: Montero's Administration*

On July 26, 1931 General Ibáñez left for Argentina, relinquishing office "...at the repeated urgings of Vice-President [Pedro] Oposo,¹² you [Juan Esteban Montero¹³], General Sáez¹⁴ and several others" because they thought that it was the best way to calm the element of public opinion adverse to him.¹⁵ Ibáñez's personal secretary René Montero recalls that Pedro Oposo, President of the Senate until the 26 of July and newly appointed Vice-President, acting in good faith assured Ibáñez that a constitutional permit had been rushed and approved in Congress so he could leave the country.¹⁶ To further encourage him, Juan Esteban Montero told Ibáñez before he departed, "History will remember the sacrifice you are making for the country."¹⁷

¹² Pedro Oposo Letelier, born in Talca in 1876 and died in 1957. Cabinet minister several times during Alessandri's first administration. Later elected Deputy and Senator for several periods. As President of the Senate, he assumed the Vice-Presidency of the Republic due to the events of July 26, 1931. Due to the brevity of his participation as he resigned in favor of his Minister of Interior Juan Esteban Montero, the satiric press called him "One day flower." The decrees 2,571 and 2,572 which delegated power on to the President of the Senate, were based on article 66 of the constitution of 1925. Armando de Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*, 4 vols. (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica, 1999-2003). III, 199. Luis Valencia Avaria, *Anales De La República*, 1 ed., vol. I (Santiago: Imprenta Universidad, 1951). 422, n. 123-124.

¹³ Juan Esteban Montero, born in Santiago in 1879 and died in the same city in 1948. He received his law degree from the *Universidad de Chile*. Ibáñez, despite that he was not his sympathetic, called him to the Ministry of Interior and of Social Welfare on the first days of July of 1931 in order to put an end the crisis. After July 26, Oposo Letelier delegated on him the Vice-Presidency of the Republic. On December of the same year, he assumed the Presidency of the Republic after winning the national election as the consensus candidate supported by a multiparty political front. Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. III, 147.

¹⁴ Carlos Saez Morales, born in Santiago in 1881 and died in the same city in 1941. He entered the *Escuela Militar* in 1895 and reached the rank of general. Minister of War during Montero's presidency, he also was Minister of War and navy during Alessandri's second administration. He published his 3 volume memoirs *Recuerdos de un soldado* which are rich sources for studying the period. *Ibid.* IV, 91-92.

¹⁵ Letter from Tobías Barros to Juan Esteban Montero. Talca, November 9, 1931.

¹⁶ René Montero Moreno, *La Verdad Sobre Ibáñez* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Freeland, 1953). 173

¹⁷ Luis Correa Prieto, *El Presidente Ibáñez, La Política Y Los Políticos. Apuntes Para La Historia* (Santiago: Editorial Orbe, 1962). 154

Years later in an interview with José Miguel Varas Calvo, Barros Ortíz¹⁸ affirmed that Ibáñez left the presidency because he feared that a bold minority opposition “reinforced by economical circumstances,” would continue inflaming and deluding students and leading Chile to a civil war.¹⁹ Following constitutional guidelines, Ibáñez requested permission from Parliament to step down, and the Senate approved it on the same day. The permit was temporarily tied up in the House of Deputies, however. Since his cabinet had already renounced their positions, Ibáñez’s rushed his departure, leaving the presidency in the hands of his temporary successor Pedro Opasso Letelier, chair of the Senate.²⁰ The hurry was not only political. He had to reach the passageway through the Cordillera given that it might close any minute due to the heavy snow that often falls in July, sometimes closing the pass until September.²¹

In the following days, with Ibáñez on his way to Buenos Aires, Congress deposed him for abandoning the country without the Parliament’s permission (July 29) citing article 67 of the Constitution.²² Pedro Opasso had given him a half-truth that his leaving was constitutional and Ibáñez felt betrayed. When he learned what happened, the now former President insisted on returning to the country, but his wife and Tobias Barros, who

¹⁸ Tobías Barros Ortíz, born in Santiago in 1894 and died in 1995. He enter the *Escuela Militar* in 1895 and retired from the army in 1940. Appointed secretary of the Junta of 1925. During the presidency of Pedro Aguirre Cerda appointed ambassador in Germany. In Ibáñez’s second administration, first appointed ambassador in Italy, and latter, Minister of Foreign Affairs, of the National Defense, and Public Education. Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*.I, 160

¹⁹ José Miguel Varas Calvo, *Ibáñez, El Hombre. (Biografía, Historia, Crítica)* (Santiago de Chile: Talleres Gráficos "El Imparcial", 1952)., 202

²⁰ Letter of Tobías Barros to Juan Esteban Montero. Talca, November 9, 1931

²¹ Tobías Barros Ortíz, *Tobías Barros Ortíz: Entrevista*, ed. Claudio Orrego Vicuña (Santiago: Aconcagua, 1979). 76

²² Vial Correa, *Historia De Chile (1891 - 1973)*. 15-16

were accompanying him, convinced him otherwise.²³ Subsequently after his deposition, the chamber of Deputies presented an impeachment of the former President to the Senate. They accused him of prosecuting members of Parliament and other citizens (arrests, deportations, exiles) during the term of his administration.²⁴

As soon as Carlos Ibáñez reached Buenos Aires, he gave a first interview to a reporter. He declared that he was serene and in complete peace in all that concerned his actions. He affirmed that he had not escaped and his departure was by no means a runaway, however, for the moment, he preferred to remain silent as to the events. He declared himself a “spectator” and that he would remain in the city willing to comply with the Chilean law if called upon to return to his country. Lastly, he affirmed that he would stay in Buenos Aires for an underdetermined period.²⁵

Ibáñez never gave up the idea of going back to Chile to defend himself. Carlos Sáez, Minister of War under the Vice-Presidency of Montero, recalls in his memoirs the commotion produced by the rumors that the General intended to return. Sáez says that the rumors were true, as he had received a telegram from Ibáñez that confirmed his plans. He wanted to challenge that mistaken idea that he had fled and he wanted to know why the government had not confirmed that. He also wanted to return with the authorization of the Montero government to respond to any charges that the opposition might bring against him at the Senate’s impeachment procedure. Montero’s government was

²³ Ibid. 16. Also, Tobías Barros Ortiz, *Recogiendo Los Pasos -Testigo Militar Y Político Del Siglo Xx* (Santiago: Editorial Planeta, 1988).

²⁴ Vial Correa, *Historia De Chile (1891 - 1973)*. 16

²⁵ Würth Rojas, *Ibáñez, Caudillo Enigmático*. 181

especially concerned and Montero personally committed himself to resolve the situation of the former President.²⁶ At any rate, the Ibáñez informed the consul in Buenos Aires of his intentions of flying to Santiago and asked his friends to spare no effort in allowing him to defend himself.²⁷

With Montero's permission, Sáez called Ibáñez and informed him about the terrible consequences that his arrival might produce not only for the new government, but also for the country, as it might even lead to a civil war due to the precarious political situation. Faced with these facts, the General decided not to return.²⁸ This may explain why several days later the Government reported that it had communicated to Ibáñez that the Senate decided to proceed with the impeachment, and that Ibáñez declared that he had nothing to answer.²⁹ Seeing that it was impossible to return, Ibáñez sent a letter to the Chamber of Deputies³⁰ and published the pamphlet "Ex-President Ibáñez confronts the

²⁶ Letter from Tobías Barros to Juan Esteban Montero. Talca, November 9, 1931.

²⁷ Montero Moreno, *La Verdad Sobre Ibáñez*. 177

²⁸ Carlos Sáez Morales, *Recuerdos De Un Soldado*, 3 vols. (Santiago: Editorial Ercilla, 1933-1934). III, 24-26

²⁹ Würth Rojas, *Ibáñez, Caudillo Enigmático*. 183

³⁰ Cámara de Diputados, 49ª sesión ordinaria, 31 de agosto de 1931, p. 1765-1767. In, Brian Loveman and Elizabeth Lira, *Las Acusaciones Constitucionales En Chile. Una Perspectiva Histórica* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones / FLACSO Chile, 2000). 31. Extracts of the letter with date August 27, 1931 are as follows:

"Cuando el desgobierno, la anarquía y la corrupción habían conducido al estagnamiento nacional, cuando el pueblo, engañado y abandonado, era la víctima constante de los políticos y agitadores profesionales, cuando los responsables del destino de la patria, desoyendo el clamor general del país que pedía progreso, trabajo y bienestar parecían únicamente empeñados en exhibir su aparente respeto por la Constitución, invocada como baluarte para justificar la inacción y cada vez que se trataba de defender intereses en pugna con el bien público, la juventud de las fuerzas armadas, seguida por la opinión sana del país, puso término a un periodo de la historia nacional que no necesito calificar (...)

Si hice bien o mal, eso lo dirá la historia, cuyo fallo no logran torcer ni la campaña de odios y de falsedades que con propósitos explicable se quiere desprestigiar el régimen que yo serví, ni la acusación constitucional que formulan en mi contra, en términos que no se me han dado a conocer, algunos honorables Diputados que en más de una oportunidad me alentaron manifestándome su adhesión a mi política.

accusation” in Buenos Aires.³¹

The debate and vote for the impeachment occurred on October 26. Vial says that it was grotesque that the same people that held office thanks to Ibáñez in the “Congreso Termal,”³² now wanted to prosecute him. Vial added that senator Juan Luis Carmona demanded to know why these charges were not brought before Congress during the “dictatorship,” and he also claims that Enrique Zañartu and Fidel Estay made a solid defense of Ibáñez. Pedro Pablo Dartnell, an old friend and former comrade of Ibáñez, recognized the patriotism and honesty of the defendant's intentions, but he also maintained that Ibáñez had violated the Constitution. The Senate finally approved the charges with Estay offering the sole dissenting vote, since Zañartu did not attend.³³

Ibáñez had abandoned power with the “traditional poorness” with which Chilean

(...) No es mi deseo recurrir en mi defensa a argumentos abogadiles, pero si debo manifestar que después de esos hechos fui elegido Presidente de la Republica, cuya elección fue sancionada por la gran mayoría del Congreso Nacional, elegido por el pueblo dos años antes y fui adamado de un extremo a otro del país; a todas las provincias que visite, cansadas de anarquía política y desgobierno, se me pedía gobierno fuerte, el restablecimiento de la autoridad y la expulsión de los elementos perturbadores. Si hice mal accediendo a los impulsos de una fuerte opinión pública, resuelva ahora la Honorable Cámara si debo expiar en el presidio el delito de haber llevado a la realidad las aspiraciones nacionales de ese tiempo. Una vez más, el 26 de julio último, quise satisfacer nuevamente las aspiraciones del país, quise cumplir los deseos exteriorizados por una gran cantidad de mis conciudadanos que clamaban por un gobierno totalmente civil. Dentro de mi invariable propósito de someterme a la voluntad nacional y de evitar derramamiento de sangre, resolví delegar el mando a un civil. Lo hice en el Presidente del Senado.”

³¹ Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, *El Ex-Presidente Ibáñez Contesta La Acusación* (Buenos Aires: S/P, 1931).

³² In the “Congreso Termal,” the representatives of both chambers were not elected since the political parties and the administration of the time, reached an agreement to bypass the elections. The legality of this accord was based on the law of general elections that stated that if a district or circumscription had the same amount of candidates as electable members, elections would not be enforced. It is not hard to imagine that the Government must have used this to exclude any dissident voice. On the other hand, the political parties won the favor of an administration that at that time seemed so popular. Once the popularity of the administration started to decay, its acceptance turned intolerable. The name was given due to Chillan *thermae*, placed where the meetings were held in order to select the candidates.

³³ Vial Correa, *Historia De Chile (1891 - 1973)*. 16

presidents leave power.³⁴ He left the country with only the five thousand pesos that corresponded to his current wages.³⁵ When, at the beginning of 1932, two young Chileans paid him a visit (one of which was the son of a prominent political figure), one of his first impressions was of the modesty of Ibanez's circumstances. He says his case was "curious" for someone accused of being a dictator. He believed that his image was far from fitting the typical description of Latin American dictators: "egomaniacal and greedy, determined to enrich themselves with the income of the public treasury, looking forward to owning all kinds of business." On the contrary, this eyewitness points out that "the Ibáñez I have met is on the contrary, someone who does not use the 'I' for everything he says, and lives in two narrow rooms."³⁶ To further prove his point he says that when he took a taxi and asked the driver to take him to Ibáñez, he was surprised of the taxi driver response: "Ibáñez is a serious person and that lives in a small apartment... how different to Guggiari [former President of Paraguay] who lives in *juergas* [parties] and in a palace!"³⁷

Once Ibáñez had settled in Buenos Aires, he received letters from many fellow countrymen that not only provided insight into their emotional response to his leaving but also considered those variables that produced his defeat. One letter noted, "The grief and pain caused by your estrangement, which we deem temporary, is so great that I cannot

³⁴ Ricardo Boizard, *Cuatro Retratos En Profundidad: Ibáñez - Laferte - Leighton - Walker* (Santiago: Talleres de "El Imparcial", 1950). 63

³⁵ Vial Correa, *Historia De Chile (1891 - 1973)*. 19

³⁶ Correa Prieto, *El Presidente Ibáñez, La Política Y Los Políticos. Apuntes Para La Historia*. 21

³⁷ *Ibid.* 18

tell... all that I am suffering, all this enormous anguish because of your departure.”³⁸

Another letter suggested that Chile would fall on apocalyptic times: “...all hope of tomorrow has ended, the future is no longer of import, my interest in the future has abated...”³⁹ One of Ibáñez’s correspondents even sent him letters that came close to being true declarations of love: “If I would have loved you... you were single, and as President... you needed to be loved.”⁴⁰

Correspondents pondered over what had led to the failure of the Ibáñez’s project to renew the political system and modernize the country. One noted that even though Ibáñez might have had good intentions, he undoubtedly lacked good collaborators: “perhaps the obstacles were so great that you could not avoid them, and bit by bit things got to an extreme that created a mire that in itself led to the events which we all today regret.”⁴¹ As a modern author asserts, “in spite of persecutions and censorship [during Ibáñez’s administration], a temporary aura of prosperity made many people optimistic.” However, when the depression struck, “the Ibáñez formula for prosperity failed.”⁴²

It is notable that while some of the letters sent to Ibáñez expressed support, others attempted to justify the less than accommodating attitudes of some of his former collaborators after he left office. For example, Ismael Edwards Matte explained his

³⁸ Letter of Colonel Ernesto García Fernández to Carlos Ibáñez. July 31, 1931

³⁹ Letter of Colonel Ernesto García Fernández to Carlos Ibáñez. July 31, 1931

⁴⁰ Letter of Elena Sanhueza Saavedra to Carlos Ibáñez. July 31, 1931

⁴¹ Letter of Santiago Castro López to Carlos Ibáñez. August 1, 1931

⁴² John L. Rector, *The History of Chile* (Westport, Connecticut / London: Greenwood Press, 2003). 149

“abstention and silence” in defense of the fallen regime with a boxing analogy.⁴³ He suggested that “In many cases it is convenient ‘not to fight’ in the early rounds.”⁴⁴ He justified himself by saying that he now knew that he was right when he had proposed years earlier the importance of creating a political movement that could have helped channel the ideals of Ibáñezism. The organized group would have displaced the antiquated political party structure of the old times guided by the “ideology of the revolution” that Ibáñez embodied, and would have prevented the resurgence of the same old structure that tore him down.⁴⁵

As will become evident later, neither Ibáñez nor the majority of his supporters anticipated the usefulness of a political “front” that embodied Ibáñez’s principles for the time of crisis they were living. Ismael Edwards may have been right when he said that this “front” could have prevented (or at least delayed) the political calamity of the country. With its help, the government could have relied on a well-organized political organization that confronted the criticism of the opposition, but Ibáñez had delayed the emergence of a personalistic political movement. However, as René Olivares mentions, such a transformation of Chilean politics in 1931 was already underway, as the “Alessandrismo”⁴⁶ phenomenon had already erupted.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ismael Edwards Matte, born in Santiago in 1891. Received his bachelor’s degree in architecture from the Universidad de Chile. Writer, he was also member of the House of Representatives in the years 1921-1924, 1926-1930, and 1930-1932 as member of the Liberal Party. Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. II, 45-46

⁴⁴ Letter of Ismael Edwards Matte to Carlos Ibáñez. October 18, 1931

⁴⁵ Letter of Ismael Edwards Matte to Carlos Ibáñez. October 18, 1931

⁴⁶ Followers of former president Arturo Alessandri Palma. Linares, 1868 - Santiago, 1950. Member of the House of Representatives and the Senate for several periods. Twice President of the Republic, 1920-1925 and 1932-1938. During his first administration, where he was elected with a populist discourse and the

Indeed, when at the beginning of July of 1931 the crisis had become inevitable, this “alessandrismo” was one of the expressions of the anti-Ibáñez movement. Government supporters regretted the return of those exiled by Ibáñez’s regime, especially former president Arturo Alessandri Palma, as he capitalized on the prevailing discontent.⁴⁸ According to those close to Ibáñez, the mass arrival of the people he had exiled would cause the resurrection of the old and infected political scheming against which he had struggled. Nevertheless, the pro-Ibañistas hoped that the returning politicians with their “retinue of ambitions and sterile struggles,” and their “strikes and threats,” would open the eyes of the Chilean populace so they might appreciate the order and respect for the authority of the Ibáñez administration.⁴⁹

When the government fell, a tenacious persecution began of Ibáñez and his collaborators, specially the closest ones. Tobías Barros Ortíz first informed Ibáñez that retributions had not occurred and that he had spoken to Carlos Dávila,⁵⁰ Ismael Edwards,

support of the most progressive parties, his presidency was considered the first one that truly represented the lower classes. He had to deal with the civil and military upheavals that led him to a short term exile, exile that did not last much as young officials led by Ibáñez imposed his return to finish his presidential term. As we show later, he was elected President in 1932. He would finish his second term with the support of the traditional parties, postponing the progressive ones to the opposition. Chile’s political life during most part of the twentieth century was determine by the figures of Alessandri, and Carlos Ibáñez del Campo.

⁴⁷ René Olivares, *Alessandri, precursor y revolucionario*, published privately, Santiago, 1942, 128-129, In, Robert J. Alexander, *Arturo Alessandri: A Biography*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor: Published for Latin American Institute, Rutgers University, by University Microfilms International, 1977). II, 531

⁴⁸ Letter of “Estrella del Oriente” to Carlos Ibáñez. August 4, 1931

⁴⁹ Letter of Alfredo Riveros Figueroa to Carlos Ibáñez. August 5, 1931

⁵⁰ Carlos Dávila, born in Los Angeles (Chile) in 1887 and died in Washington (USA) in 1955. He received his PhD degree in Law at Columbia University. Editor of the newspaper *La Nación* 1917-1927 and 1933-1954. Appointed ambassador to the United States during Ibáñez first administration, became Provisional President of the Republic when the “socialist republic” was proclaimed in 1932. In 1954, appointed secretary General of the Organization of American States, post he held until his death nearly a year after.

and numerous officers and friends, to confirm that they had arranged no counterattack. Barros considered that the opposition “has been let loose,”⁵¹ Frödden⁵² was in the northern city of La Serena, Torreblanca⁵³ at his home, and Fenner⁵⁴ in his hiding place, though he had yet not appeared publicly. From General Blanche, Barros did not have any news.⁵⁵

Indeed, just nine days after Ibáñez left the country, the Vice-President of the Republic Juan Esteban Montero –in part due to the pressure from different political sectors, but mainly from the newly arrived exiles from the regime– signed a decree. It created a commission to conduct a comprehensive study of Ibáñez’s administration since 1927.⁵⁶ The commission sought “the truth,” and wanted to document the role of the dictatorship in both violations of individual rights as well as the financial mismanagement of the country.⁵⁷

The “Comisión investigadora de los actos de la dictadura” only served to

Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. II, 11

⁵¹ Bartolomé Blanche Espejo (La Serena, 1879 – Santiago, 1970). Joined the Army on 1895 and reached the rank of Commander in Chief. Minister during Ibáñez first administration, on September 1932 he assumed the Provisional Presidency when the socialist republic was torn down. Ibid. I, 183

⁵² Carlos Frödden Lorenzen (Coronel, 1887 – Santiago, 1976). Joined the Chilean Navy reaching the rank of Vessel Capitan on 1929. On Ibáñez first Administration, appointed Minister of Marine, and later, of Interior. Ibid. II, 112

⁵³ Edecio Torreblanca White (Valparaíso, 1888 – Santiago, 1958). Comptroller General of the Republic during Ibáñez’s first Administration. After he retired, appointed Minister, both on the first and second of Ibáñez’s administrations. Ibid. IV, 184-185

⁵⁴ Oscar Fenner Marín (Curicó, 1892 – Santiago, 1982). Entered the *Escuela Militar* in 1906. In 1922, he received his bachelor’s degree in Law. During Ibáñez’s first administration, appointed Secretary General of the Presidency, and afterwards, Ministry of Land and Colonization. During Ibáñez’s second administration, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice-Minister of Education. Ibid. II, 83.

⁵⁵ Letter of Tobías Barros to Carlos Ibáñez. August 6, 1931

⁵⁶ Loveman and Lira, eds., *Los Actos De La Dictadura Comisión Investigadora, 1931*. 9

⁵⁷ Ibid. 13

exacerbate the existing hatreds. All achievements of Ibáñez's administration were subject to revision and, as one of the letters to the exiled leader recalled, "Many have vainly tried to erase any memory of your time in the House of Government." The same document highlighted that some had thought, "Simplistically... that by eliminating the inscriptions on buildings, bridges and roads that were evidence of the material progress" that they could definitively get rid of Ibáñez as a major historical figure.⁵⁸

Ibáñez's enemies did not stop at demeaning his governmental accomplishments. His opponents pursued his collaborators and, logically, Ibáñez himself. Juan Pablo Bennett⁵⁹ informed the General that some intended to deliver Ibáñez the *coup de grâce* by requesting "his removal from the Army under the pretext of the declaration of guilt made by the Senate,"⁶⁰ which would deprive him of his pension. Bennett added that he had been in touch with General Vergara⁶¹ who had been working tirelessly to secure Ibáñez's retirement with the support of Manuel Trucco.⁶² However, problems arose when Marcial Mora⁶³ and other Ministers of the cabinet began a "tenacious and bitter

⁵⁸ Letter of Ismael Edwards to Carlos Ibáñez. October 18, 1931

⁵⁹ General Juan Pablo Bennet Argandoña (La Serena, 1871 – Santiago, 1951) joined the Army on 1883 and retired on 1925. Member of the Military Junta of September 1924. Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. I, 173

⁶⁰ Letter of Juan Pablo Bennett to Carlos Ibáñez. November 5, 1931

⁶¹ Carlos Vergara Montero (1883-1959) joined the army reaching the rank of General. On Montero's government, appointed Minister of War. Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. IV, 255

⁶² Manuel Trucco Franzani (Cauquenes, 1875 – Santiago, 1954), professor of the Universidad de Chile when called to take part of the Montero administration as Minister of Interior. Became Vice-President during the presidential campaign of 1931, as Montero ran for office on for that year elections. Senator of the Radical Party. During Alessandri's second administration, appointed ambassador to the USA. *Ibid*. IV, 190

⁶³ Marcial Mora (Chillán, 1895 – Santiago, 1972), appointed Prime Minister during the Trucco Vice-Presidency, and conserved his post when Montero won the elections. During Aguirre Cerda's administration, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Finance. During Juan Antonio Ríos' presidency, appointed

campaign” against Ibáñez.⁶⁴ The newspapers reported that the message that dismissed Ibáñez from the army had been “written and signed” by Trucco and Vergara. The involvement of the former did not surprise Bennett, since he was never a sympathizer, but he found Vergara’s actions hard to believe, since he considered him a good man and a friend of Ibáñez. As might be expected, Ibáñez reacted to this campaign against him with resentment. He wrote to his former personal secretary saying that in fairness, his pension belonged to him by law, adding that a rightful Government would never deny him “the bread to which I aspire... the only reward for the sacrifice of a lifetime devoted to the public service of Chile.”⁶⁵

The attempt to dismiss Ibáñez from the army led a group of pro-Ibañista officials to request early retirement en masse. The most notable case was that of Commander Barros Ortíz. However, the Government denied Ortiz’s request and postponed the Ibáñez dismissal.⁶⁶ From Buenos Aires, Ibáñez wrote to Admiral von Schröeders⁶⁷ saying that

ambassador in the USA. Member of the Radical Party, he also was Senator and member of the House of Representatives. Ibid. III, 156

⁶⁴ In a divergent version, Carlos Sáez Morales recalls in his memoirs that in the cabinet of ministers all members agreed in a first moment that it was not possible to deprive a former public employee from its pension. However, the problem was that they feared what the reaction would be of such decree and if would further exacerbate the public opinion. Sáez Morales, *Recuerdos De Un Soldado*. III, 27

⁶⁵ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to René Montero, September de 1931. In, Montero Moreno, *La Verdad Sobre Ibáñez*. 177

⁶⁶ Letter of Juan Pablo Bennett to Carlos Ibáñez. November 5, 1931. Barros Ortíz recalls these events in an interview made by José Miguel Varas Calvo. He says that he had accompanied Ibáñez and his wife to exile and stayed with him during eight days. When the accusations arose that Ibáñez had fled, he tried to return but the government did not allow it. That is when Barros Ortíz presented his dismissal from the army. However, and in order to prevent major conflicts, the government assigned him a regiment, “which it seemed weird to do since I had been the aide-de-camp of the one who had fled and had helped him do so.” Varas Calvo, *Ibáñez, El Hombre. (Biografía, Historia, Crítica)*. 201

⁶⁷ Edgardo von Schröeders Sarraeta (born in Valparaíso in 1886), joined the Navy and reached the rank of Vice-Admiral. Minister of Navy on Ibáñez first administration 1930-1931. Appointed by Trucco’s administration as negotiator to end a low rank marine revolt on the Coquimbo bay on the first days of

he found it hard to bear the venomous persecution, and that “if it were not for the material consciences that the removal from the army would cause me, it would not matter to me at all that they do as they wish.” Morally, he felt “quite superior to those people...”⁶⁸

According to Vial, the government attempted to mitigate the problem by finally calling for his retirement, a measure that not even Ibáñez himself could question and that saved him from losing his pension.⁶⁹

Ibáñez’s friends were also concerned with keeping him informed about his family in Chile. Tobías Barros wrote that he had been able to talk to his wife’s family, and was pleased to let him know that his youngest children were very well.⁷⁰ Barros had gone to visit them with his wife, and the youngest one Rosita was admirably serene and tranquil, “a quality rare in a little girl.” Barros affirmed the best thing would be that Cayo and Rosita leave, because General Saez believed that Cayo, Ibáñez’s eldest son, would not be able to study since “the passions will continue uncontrolled until after the Presidential election. As to Rosita, no one will bother her, of that I am convinced ...”⁷¹

Tobías Barros Ortíz was also concerned with keeping Ibáñez abreast of ongoing politics. Elections in Chile were his special interest because of the uncertainty they

September 1931. Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. IV, 120. Also, William F. Sater, "The Abortive Kronstadt: The Chilean Naval Mutiny of 1931," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 60, no. 2 (1980); Frederick M. Nunn, *Chilean Politics, 1920-1931. The Honorable Mission of the Armed Forces*, [1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970).

⁶⁸ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Edgardo von Schroeders. Buenos Aires, November 14, 1931

⁶⁹ Vial Correa, *Historia De Chile (1891 - 1973)*. 19

⁷⁰ Carlos Ibáñez del Campo first married Rosa Quiróz Ávila while serving a military mission in El Salvador, giving him two children. Widower, and during his first presidency, he married with Graciela Letelier Velasco with whom he had four more children.

⁷¹ Letter of Tobías Barros to Carlos Ibáñez. August 6, 1931

entailed: “About the future President, I very much fear that if there is no reaction soon, the communists will triumph.” With an election two months away and with no time to renew or revise the electoral records, it could produce “the greatest of surprises for the famous historic parties.”⁷² He also believed that, although “El León” –as Alessandri was known–did not have much of a chance to win the election, he could be working for a “transitioning candidate” not yet determined. Moreover, he thought that Montero already seemed to be tired of power, but “there is no doubt that if they beg him, he will accept the Presidency.” Ladislao Errázuriz,⁷³ the eternal candidate of the Liberal Party and representative of the old ruling class, seemed unlikely to be elected “unless there is an unexpected change.”⁷⁴

After learning of Montero’s triumph in the elections, Ibáñez wrote to his friend Arturo Prat Carvajal⁷⁵ to solicit his opinion about ongoing events. He felt satisfied that the country had “gotten the President it wished...” He was sure that Montero could be successful; however, he concluded that everything depended on the help he received from friends and supporters, “because if they abandon him or if he rests on his laurels, instead of his Administration triumphing, Juan Esteban will be the next victim. And that is what

⁷² Letter of Tobías Barros to Carlos Ibáñez. August 6, 1931

⁷³ Ladislao Errázuriz Lazcano (Santiago, 1882 – Fundo El Peumo, 1941), Minister of War and Marine during Sanfuentes’ administration. Member of Congress for several periods, became one of the most important members of the Liberal Party being its presidential candidate on January of 1925. Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. 60-61

⁷⁴ Letter of Tobías Barros to Carlos Ibáñez. August 6, 1931

⁷⁵ Arturo Prat Carvajal (Santiago, 1878 – Santiago, 1955), son the Chilean hero of the War of the Pacific Arturo Prat Chacón. Appointed Minister of Finance during the Sanfuentes’ and Montero’s administrations’. Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. 267-268

must be avoided at all costs for the good of the country.”⁷⁶

TABLE 1: Result of the elections held October 4, 1931⁷⁷

Candidates	Number of votes	Percentages
Juan Esteban Montero	182,177	63,93%
Arturo Alessandri	99,075	34,77%
Manuel Hidalgo	1,263	0,44%
Elías Lafertte	2,434	0,86%

Since the elections led to a new constitutional government, the possibility of Ibáñez returning to the country depended on the new authorities. This is why Juan Pablo Bennett was concerned about exploring the possibility of ending Ibáñez’s exile in the near future. However, he wrote to Ibáñez that his return for the time being would cause alarm “until the course of the Montero Administration could be clearly seen, and no one is disguising the difficulties and stumbling blocks that he will face.” That is why he encouraged Ibáñez to prepare himself to remain abroad for at least one more year.⁷⁸

In the meantime, the pro-ibañistas decided to use the media to shield the ideals that Ibañism embodied. However, the existing press at the time was not willing to risk accusations of supporting the fallen government. The importance of defending securing themselves from the accusations against them led to the idea of publishing an “Ibañist” newspaper. Carlos Dávila was in charge of organizing it, and Valdés would be the editor.

⁷⁶ Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to Arturo Prat. Buenos Aires, October 8, 1931

⁷⁷ Germán Urzúa Valenzuela, *Historia Política De Chile Y Su Evolución Electoral (Desde 1819 a 1992)* (Santiago: Editorial Jurídica de Chile, 1992). 454

⁷⁸ Letter of Juan Pablo Bennett to Carlos Ibáñez. Santiago, October 13, 1931

The collaborators called the proposed newspaper *La Prensa*.⁷⁹ An “official” publication would help them to organize, but it would also foreclose any attempt by political opponents to say that the “Ibañists” were conspiring.⁸⁰ The pro-ibañistas wrote to General Ibáñez asking for his collaboration. More importantly, they asked if he could send Renato Valdés⁸¹ a copy of the notification from the Chilean Embassy in Argentina that informed him that he could not enter the country so that they could make it public.⁸²

However, this first attempt at founding a newspaper ultimately failed. Some time later, Ibañism was able to produce a publication that defended its ideals. Ismael Edwards, Antonio Planet⁸³ and Conrado Ríos were involved in the magazine *Hoy*.⁸⁴ Carlos Dávila, who had been the editor of what became the official newspaper of the fallen government (and owned by the state) *La Nación*, became the editor once again. Edwards’ economic support was key in opening and sustaining the magazine during the first period.

Nevertheless, historian Ricardo Donoso doubts the “purity of the intentions” of this

⁷⁹ Letter of Joaquín Fernández to Carlos Ibáñez. Santiago, November 20, 1931

⁸⁰ Letter of Emilio Rodríguez Mendoza to Carlos Ibáñez. December 14, 1931

⁸¹ Renato Valdés Alfonso, closed supporter of Ibáñez whom in the first administration granted him with the Intendancy of Bío Bío, and afterwards the one of the city of Concepción. Later, Consul in Austria and Panamá. Editor of the *Revista Estanquero* that was closely linked to the Ibañismo and Ibáñez himself. Owner of the restaurant *El Naturista*, place well known for publishing in its walls news regarding Ibáñez and his followers. Ramón F., *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. IV, 212

⁸² Months later Emilio Rodríguez wrote to General Ibáñez to convince him that he needed to write his testimony and publish it. In fact, he offered him to help: “...how interesting, how useful, and how indispensable to history [...] would be that you would write your memoirs from January 1925 till July 1931[...] If you are resolved to work with me two or months... I would see how to move to undertake the task as soon as possible.” Later we will see how effectively Ibáñez left a diary but of his exile. Letter of Emilio Rodríguez Mendoza to Carlos Ibáñez. April 3, 1932

⁸³ Antonio Planet Cordero, editor of the newspaper *La Nación*. In charged of the negotiations on the question of the Tacna and Arica. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Commerce, and Minister of Justice during Ibáñez’s first administration. José Armando de Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*, 4 vols. (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica, 1999-2003). III, 257-258.

⁸⁴ The political magazine *Hoy* was published from November 1931 until October 1943

publication. He says that *Hoy* and its pro-Alessandri counterpart *Crónica* magazine, from their first edition waged a “ruthless campaign of criticism, a bloody and corrosive hostility... a systematic discrediting of Montero’s administration.”⁸⁵

One year later, in December 1932, the magazine already had a capital of around 200,000 pesos and a large readership. Davila, who had borrowed ideas from the newly founded US magazine *Time*, was largely responsible for the success of *Hoy*.⁸⁶ The plan was for the magazine to evolve into a newspaper, but to do so required a significant amount of capital. The Ibañists therefore intended to invite Guzmán Moreno⁸⁷ to participate in the company, as he possessed the necessary means. Before they made an agreement, they asked Ibáñez to make an initial approach since Guzmán Moreno had been one of his supporters. Unfortunately, on January 9th 1933, Guzmán Moreno died suddenly and the newspaper project was postponed.⁸⁸ Instead, the organizers of *Hoy* eventually published the satirical magazine *Verdejo*, which helped to counter the satirical attacks against the General. According to Conrado Ríos, unlike *Topaze* “it is funny and ... it stands out for its good and clean jokes.”⁸⁹

The whereabouts of General Ibáñez at the beginning of 1932 was cause for speculation in the Chilean press. Only his closest collaborators were aware that he had set

⁸⁵ Donoso Novoa, *Alessandri, Agitador Y Demoleedor. Cincuenta Años De Historia Política De Chile*. II, 75

⁸⁶ Vial Correa, *Historia De Chile (1891 - 1973)*. 93

⁸⁷ Fernando Guzmán Moreno (1872-1933) Member of Parliament during the years 1918-1921. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. II, 196

⁸⁸ Letter from Conrado Ríos to Carlos Ibáñez, January 9, 1933

⁸⁹ Letter from Conrado Ríos to Carlos Ibáñez, February 3, 1933

up residence in Mendoza, just on the other side of the cordillera. Olegario Lazo Baeza's⁹⁰ letter to Ibáñez in May 1932 shows the confusion surrounding Ibáñez's whereabouts, as he informed him that telegrams published in the French newspapers placed him in the city of La Plata. Others speculated that he was on a trip to El Salvador, where he had met his first wife while on a military mission in the first decade of the twentieth century, and where he still had important contacts. The most recent speculation of the press according to Lazo Baeza, placed him in Mendoza awaiting authorization from the Chilean government to return to the country.⁹¹

Letters to Ibáñez also speculated that Montero's administration was considering the possibility of allowing the General to return to the country. Since the situation remained unchanged and Ibáñez was not convinced that this could be true, he wrote to Liberal Party Senator Gabriel Letelier Elgart⁹² and asked him to help his wife Graciela to arrange her trip to Argentina. Ibáñez was especially fearful that the children would "freeze" while crossing the mountains "unless they leave in perfectly good condition." He insisted he should contact the manager of PANGRA –the *Pan-American Grace Airways*–, to request the greatest facilities possible for the trip and even a 50% discount on the fare.⁹³

There was another reason why Ibáñez hurried to bring his family to the other side

⁹⁰ Olegario Lazo Baeza (1878-1974) joined the Army and reached the rank of general. He wrote several books regarding the military life. Fernando Castillo (et.al.), *Diccionario Histórico Y Biográfico De Chile* (Santiago: Editorial Zig Zag, 1999).

⁹¹ Letter of Olegario Lazo to Carlos Ibáñez, May 8, 1932.

⁹² Gabriel Letelier Elgart (b.1886), member of the Liberal Party. Elected member of the House of Representatives (1928-1930) and of the Senate (1930-1932). Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. III, 44

⁹³ Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to Gabriel Letelier, May 21, 1932

of the cordillera: Ricardo Letelier⁹⁴ –his father-in-law and political patron–⁹⁵ had died on March 14 of that year. Emilio Rodríguez Mendoza⁹⁶ had written to Ibáñez informing him that, due to Leteliers’s relation with the General, “there were no speeches at the burial, which means that politics even reached funerals.”⁹⁷

The year 1932 would be tremendously difficult for Chile. Reports sent to Ibáñez showed that the situation in the country seemed to worsen every day. One of the letters highlighted that people talked incessantly of “conspiracies, juntas, and caudillos.” Rodríguez Mendoza could not assert if there was any truth to any of these rumors. What he could confirm was that the danger of a popular uprising was growing, but unfortunately, it was “no longer political in nature but rather terrifyingly and exclusively social.”⁹⁸ Emilio Rodríguez also informed Ibáñez that the situation had reached a point where “...today, one must be ready to go to war against hunger because there is a Bolshevik in every empty stomach...” What aggravated the situation, according to Rodríguez, was the fact that the Government believed that there was a permanent conspiracy against it, since it perceived there was unanimous discontent. True or not, the only ones exempted from charges of conspiracy were “the small circle that had avidly

⁹⁴ Ricardo Letelier Silva (Talca, 1851 – Santiago, 1932), received his degree in Law from the Universidad de Chile. Important members of the Liberal Party, and member of the House of Representatives. Consolidated a social, economical, and political situation. Considered one of the most influential persons of his time. Father of Graciela, second wife of Carlos Ibáñez. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. III, 49-50.

⁹⁵ Letter from Armando Rojas Molina to Carlos Ibáñez, Valdivia, March 17, 1932

⁹⁶ Emilio Rodríguez Mendoza (Valparaíso, 1873 – Santiago?, 1960), notable diplomat and journalist. Member of the Senate 1930-1932. Wrote several books that are important as sources for the period like *Como si fuera ayer* and *Como si fuera ahora*. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. IV, 58.

⁹⁷ Letter from Emilio Rodríguez to Carlos Ibáñez, April 3, 1932

⁹⁸ Letter from Emilio Rodríguez to Carlos Ibáñez, April 3, 1932

regained power again after 4 years of forced estrangement” and were already inside Montero’s administration.⁹⁹

Ibáñez worried about the situation of the country as he received news from different sources. He considered that the scenario could not be more serious, mainly because of the disorientation of the government. If major changes did not occur, he thought, tyranny would become the only solution. His perception was that a final debacle was inevitable, as Chile was on its way to resembling the Mexico of Madero and Pancho Villa. He expressed concern about how the situation might affect the country’s foreign policy, and he worried that Chile would be humiliated before the rest of the world: “all because of our domestic anarchy and pessimism and virtually total disarmament...”¹⁰⁰ However, his desire was not to intervene, for the moment, in politics. His only and most heartfelt aspiration was to strengthen his family life by reuniting it once again.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Letter from Emilio Rodríguez to Carlos Ibáñez, April 3, 1932

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Emilio Rodríguez, April 27, 1932

¹⁰¹ Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to René Montero. June 1932. In, Montero Moreno, *La Verdad Sobre Ibáñez*.

2. *The political turmoil of 1932: Ibáñez and the socialist republic*

Ibáñez's perception of Chilean reality turned out to be quite accurate. On June 4 of 1932, a coalition of army officers, freemasons, and socialists, staged a successful coup that overthrew Montero's administration. However, Ibáñez did not take a critical position because some of his supporters were involved. Led by Marmaduke Grove and Eugenio Matte Hurtado, they proclaimed the "socialist republic."

As soon as Ibáñez received the news of June 4th, he sent telegrams to Alejandro Lazo¹⁰² at the Ministry of the Interior, and Marmaduke Grove¹⁰³ at the Ministry of Defense.¹⁰⁴ He also sent one to Carlos Dávila, who had been involved in the events from the first moment. A letter congratulating him followed, wherein Ibáñez lauded the fall of the "infamous Government of Mr. Montero," adding that under firmly established principles he was "decidedly against the intervention of the armed forces in politics, yet... there are cases when it is fully justified..."¹⁰⁵

Surely, Ibáñez shifted rapidly towards the socialist discourse of the time, as he saw that some of his supporters were involved. In this sense, he considered that the new government required all cooperation "for the justified hopes for social vindication."

¹⁰² Alejandro Lazo Guevara (1895-1969), freemason and member of the Army. Played a decisive role on the events of September 1924. Close collaborator of Ibáñez, designated Minister of Social Welfare during Ibáñez's first administration. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. III, 36

¹⁰³ Marmaduke Grove Vallejos (1879-1954), joined the Army on 1898. Involved in the Military coup of January 1925. In June 1932, became one of the most important members of the socialist faction (the party was not created until 1933) during this period. At the end of 1932, proclaimed candidate for the presidency were Arturo Alessandri Palma defeated him. *Ibid.* II, 182

¹⁰⁴ Copy. Jun 5, 1932

¹⁰⁵ Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to Carlos Dávila. June 5, 1932

Ibáñez considered himself as a “spiritual member of the triumphant regime,” as well as a loyal friend of Dávila and of other members of the Government. He foresaw that the struggle against the reaction would surely be very hard, but he truly believed that in the end “if you only move towards a moderate socialism” the triumph could be secure. He also warned Dávila that if there were no effective propaganda campaign throughout the country, their program could fail. Ibáñez feared the reaction of the rightist forces, since “with all their great material resources, experience, skill and immoral tactics ... they will hinder the development of your plan, first surreptitiously and then their economic, financial, political and social opposition could make it impossible for you to govern.”¹⁰⁶

On the 12th of the same month, Ibáñez wrote to Joaquín Fernández¹⁰⁷ congratulating him for his appointment as new Mayor of Santiago. In that letter, he justified the fall of Montero’s government for a new one that promised “justice and social good.”¹⁰⁸ He affirmed to Fernández that a respectful socialism of “well-earned rights” would have to go forward in Chile, “however many snags arise and however many times it trips.” Key pillars would be Puga¹⁰⁹ and Dávila, as they were men of good intentions and well prepared.”¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, Ibáñez foresaw that things could go wrong due to the ambition of

¹⁰⁶ Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to Carlos Dávila. June 5, 1932

¹⁰⁷ Joaquín Fernández y Fernández (1891-1979) joined the Chilean Foreign Affairs Service on 1916 reaching the rank of Ambassador. He was in charge of the Intendancy of Acancagua during Ibáñez’s first administration. and the one of Santiago during Dávila administration. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. II, 91.

¹⁰⁸ Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to Joaquín Fernández, June 12, 1932

¹⁰⁹ Arturo Puga Osorio (b.1879) joined the Army and reached the rank of general. Involved on the coup of 4 June 1932. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. III, 278.

¹¹⁰ Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to Joaquín Fernández. June 12, 1932.

Grove, his former comrade-in-arms. He recognized his great abilities, but also felt he needed to be subdued, otherwise “if he is let loose, he will ruin the best effort... who knows if with the country soaking in blood... and the best values of the new era perverted.” This is why Ibáñez insisted that that “Don Marma” –as Grove was known– needed to be restrained as otherwise he would “take off and no one will be able to avoid his downfall.”¹¹¹

The unstable situation continued, as Carlos Dávila in a new successful coup on June 15 assumed full powers and exiled Grove and Matte to Eastern Isle. Ibáñez sent new telegrams, this time to Carlos Dávila in the President’s Office and Arturo Puga in the Ministry of Interior.¹¹² He also wrote to Arturo Merino Benítez¹¹³ about his declarations in the *Wiken* magazine, where Merino had characterized Ibáñez as incapable of taking a risk on an enterprise that “albeit uncertain, meant, on the other hand, the salvation of the fatherland.” Ibáñez took this accusation seriously. Even though it is impossible to speculate if his conduct was determined by his indecisiveness, his determined patriotism, or his personal interest, his response to Merino is worth citing at length, as he seems to take a somehow different position on the coup d’état to the one he declared to Carlos Dávila:

[It was] proposed to me [to overthrow Montero] 2, 3, 5 times and each of those times I refused to do it... I have never claimed that I am the right person for extraordinary undertakings. Nor have I refused to take risks...

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² Copy. Jun 15, 1932

¹¹³ Arturo Merino Benítez (b.1888). During Ibáñez government, helped organized the Chilean civil and military aviation. He was the first Commander in Chief of the National Air Force

to confront all dangers and all responsibilities... I have never denied my cooperation to anything useful provided it would not contradict my convictions as citizen, soldier and man... It is true, I am not a man for the undertaking that you proposed... I have scruples and I am devoted to political–military principles that prevent me from cooperating in de facto procedures against a public power elected in proper popular election... Whether or not the choice is right, it represented... the sovereign intent of *the Nation* and I will never go against that sovereignty. What’s more, I am still opposed to the military overthrow of a de facto Government that, once established, has followed the normal rules of law.¹¹⁴

Ibáñez also took the opportunity to reprimand Merino Benítez the debt he had with their old friendship. However, he recognized in him “all the worth of my fatherland where, unfortunately, its poor regimes and worse governments have undermined even the noblest virtues of our race.” Nevertheless, Ibáñez acknowledged Merino’s virtue of character and force of will, but wished he could only control his political impulses “and hold to your noble mission.” As in Grove’s case, Ibáñez feared that Merino’s political abilities could betray him. Proof of this was Merino’s interview, published in the *Wiken* magazine, in which he called on the Army to mutiny.¹¹⁵

At the start, it appeared that the coup might make it possible for Ibáñez to return from exile. The Minister of the Interior of the Junta, General Puga, authorized him by phone to return to the country. However, Puga later changed that decision, causing a

¹¹⁴ Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to Arturo Merino Benítez, June 14, 1932.

¹¹⁵ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Arturo Merino Benítez. June 14, 1932.

serious problem.¹¹⁶ For Ibáñez this indecision was unacceptable and in a spur-of-the-moment decision, he went back to Chile. His letters show his emotional state: he could not stand being away from his family any more, though he was willing to make any sacrifice for them. Ibáñez considered his situation unfair and decided to take a chance by traveling secretly to Chile despite Puga's prohibition to avoid drawing protests. Unfortunately, according to Ibáñez, two of his friends revealed his secret.¹¹⁷

Was his family his only reason for entering the country? A letter to Luis Schmidt reveals Ibáñez's troubled mood.¹¹⁸ He noted that he had entered the country at some point in July "with no commitment to anyone," just one month after Montero's overthrow and with the desire not to meddle in politics. However, things did not go as planned.¹¹⁹ Ibáñez's supporters had thought that since Davila had been an old supporter of their natural leader, his ascension to power could only mean that as soon as Ibáñez arrived, Davila would transfer the post to him.¹²⁰

However, Davila had no intention of resigning nor of permitting Ibáñez to enter the country. Colonel Arturo Merino Benítez, commander in chief of the Chilean Air Force, not only had instructed the airports to deny landing permission to any airplane in

¹¹⁶ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the editor of the newspaper "El Imparcial", September 23, 1932; and, Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to Oscar Fenner, June 2, 1933. In the interview Ibáñez gave to Correa Prieto several years later, he recalls that he first talked to Juan Antonio Ríos. Cf. Correa Prieto, *El Presidente Ibáñez, La Política Y Los Políticos. Apuntes Para La Historia*. 161-162.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the editor of the newspaper "El Imparcial", September 23, 1932; and, Letter of Carlos Ibáñez to Oscar Fenner, June 2, 1933

¹¹⁸ Luis Schmidt (1877-1959) was minister during the first Ibáñez administration. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. IV, 118-119.

¹¹⁹ Correa Prieto, *El Presidente Ibáñez, La Política Y Los Políticos. Apuntes Para La Historia*. 164

¹²⁰ Donoso Novoa, *Alessandri, Agitador Y Demoleedor. Cincuenta Años De Historia Política De Chile*. I, 110

which Ibáñez flew, but he also banned the selling of tickets to him from the National Airline.¹²¹ In view of this, he contacted some of his family and friends, who sent him a passport under the name of Domingo Aránguiz, which he received in Mendoza.¹²² Immediately after, he boarded the plane, having bribed one of the airline agents who had recognized him and warned him that he could not fly with false documents.¹²³ As soon as Ibáñez reached Santiago, he headed for his late father-in-law's house where his family was staying, just across Morande 80, one of the main entrances to the governmental palace.¹²⁴

Just a couple of hours after his arrival, the word had spread that he had arrived. Ibáñez waited patiently for Dávila's call.¹²⁵ He later remembered that "hundreds visited me, civilian and military. There was no more room for the people in the halls of the house."¹²⁶ Some of his supporters actually encouraged him to cross the street and "take over" the governmental palace *La Moneda*, but it seems that Ibáñez found the situation unclear, and did not dare to do so. Some said that he had arrived too late.¹²⁷ Others advised Ibáñez that he should first pay Dávila a visit, because, "due to the surprise of my [Ibáñez's] trip, he had fallen ill."¹²⁸

Ibáñez recalls that when he arrived at Dávila's house, he first encountered Arturo Merino Benítez. Merino was very violent and warned him that the National Air Force did

¹²¹ Correa Prieto, *El Presidente Ibáñez, La Política Y Los Políticos. Apuntes Para La Historia*. 163

¹²² Ibid. 162

¹²³ Ibid. 163

¹²⁴ Würth Rojas, *Ibáñez, Caudillo Enigmático*. 194

¹²⁵ Ibid. 194

¹²⁶ Correa Prieto, *El Presidente Ibáñez, La Política Y Los Políticos. Apuntes Para La Historia*. 164

¹²⁷ Würth Rojas, *Ibáñez, Caudillo Enigmático*. 194

¹²⁸ Correa Prieto, *El Presidente Ibáñez, La Política Y Los Políticos. Apuntes Para La Historia*. 165

not want to have anything to do with him. Ibáñez then met with Dávila, a discussion that almost ended in *trompadas* (punches). The conversation was long, and Dávila finally agreed to resign his position. Ibáñez would assume the Vice-Presidency, and Dávila, appointed in the new cabinet, would be in charge of preparing his presidential election.¹²⁹ Dávila warned Ibáñez that his intention was to give the country a new constitution more appropriate to the epoch in which they were living. Ibáñez granted such a possibility and in the meantime accepted control of the government because of the lack of authority in the country. Moreover, he thought that Chile had been living in a state of permanent convulsion. In addition, he believed the instability stemmed from his unlawful removal from power.¹³⁰

Ricardo Donoso, one of the scholars who has deeply studied this period, says that at the time the country's spirits were so demoralized that anyone bold enough and with the backing of the military forces could take power.¹³¹ Proof of this is that Ibáñez affirmed to Schmidt that when he arrived in the country, he could have taken over the government and caused new disorders and "political–military scandals."¹³² Once Ibáñez arrived in Chile, the commander in chief of the Army called all heads of the garrison of Santiago to decide on the position they should take about the return of the former President. After a long discussion, they agreed to make a statement to the press, declaring

¹²⁹ Donoso Novoa, *Alessandri, Agitador Y Demoleedor. Cincuenta Años De Historia Política De Chile*. I, 110

¹³⁰ Correa Prieto, *El Presidente Ibáñez, La Política Y Los Políticos. Apuntes Para La Historia*. 165

¹³¹ Donoso Novoa, *Alessandri, Agitador Y Demoleedor. Cincuenta Años De Historia Política De Chile*. II, 110

¹³² Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Luis Schmits, December 23, 1932.

that they had no relation whatsoever with the returning of the General.¹³³ In light of this, Ibáñez foresaw that Dávila was being victim of the insatiable ambition of some “wretched comrades” of the Army and decided to return to Argentina, as he judge that the conditions were not propitious for his permanence in the country.¹³⁴ In the meantime, Arturo Alessandri, knowing that his main political contender had arrived, did not consider himself safe and took refuge in the Spanish embassy for two days while things calmed down.¹³⁵

Upon his arrival in Buenos Aires, Ibáñez wrote to the director of Santiago’s newspaper *El Imparcial*. He requested the publication of a column he had written in order to clarify some information published there by one of his friends. He explained that he had vague knowledge of the activities of some of his acquaintances during Montero’s Administration, and affirmed that they misinterpreted the reasons for his return to Chile.¹³⁶ He clarified that he had not been “taken to the country” as the publication said, adding surprisingly that his only purpose had been to return to his family after a prolonged and forced absence. He only wanted to live in peace and did not plan to engage in politics. Ibáñez felt that the given conditions “lacked any reward that might move me to intervene in the actual conditions.”¹³⁷

Davila’s administration had not presented conditions favorable to Ibáñez’s

¹³³ Donoso Novoa, *Alessandri, Agitador Y Demoleedor. Cincuenta Años De Historia Política De Chile*. II, 110

¹³⁴ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Luis Schmits, December 23, 1932.

¹³⁵ Donoso Novoa, *Alessandri, Agitador Y Demoleedor. Cincuenta Años De Historia Política De Chile*. II, 111

¹³⁶ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the editor of the newspaper “El Imparcial”, September 23, 1932

¹³⁷ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the editor of the newspaper “El Imparcial”, September 23, 1932

repatriation to Chile, much less his return to power. Despite what had happened, Dávila appointed him as Ambassador in the Argentinean Republic just before he was overthrown. Ibáñez rapidly accepted the position, even though the move drew criticism from a certain sector of the Chilean public.¹³⁸ It seemed that Dávila himself or some of his collaborators feared the political support surrounding Ibáñez. In order to stabilize the country and their power, they preferred to have Ibáñez as far away as possible from the political center. Ibáñez would never assume the diplomatic position.

The letters in Ibáñez's archive also give some insight into his changing situation, during the worsening of Chile's political climate. Actually, Ibáñez had been able to reenter the country for a second time in the year in October 1932, once Bartolomé Blanche had assumed power (on September 13) and Dávila had been forced to resign. The vice-presidency of Blanche, which aroused so much optimism among the supporters of Ibáñez, alarmed the Alessandristas who demanded a civil authority to preside over the upcoming elections of October 30. By the end of September, rumors circulated that General Blanche would not hand over power so easily. In view of this, a "constitutionalist civil front," originating in the northern city of Antofagasta, demanded that Blanche resign his post to the President of the Supreme Court, Abraham Oyanedel.¹³⁹

The situation continued to be critical, as the events that followed the downfall of Blanche's administration. This activated a campaign against Ibáñez that made it

¹³⁸ Donoso Novoa, *Alessandri, Agitador Y Demoleedor. Cincuenta Años De Historia Política De Chile*. II, 113

¹³⁹ Fernando Pinto Lagarrigue, *Alessandrismo Versus Ibañismo* (Santiago: Editorial La Noria, 1995). 93-103

necessary, at least until things settled down a little, that Ibáñez strictly retire from public life. Ibáñez sought refuge in the farm of his mother-in-law. Isolated from the world, he traveled only infrequently to the nearest city of Linares. However, Ibáñez's letters show how, despite being once again in Chile, he still felt alienated in his own country. He felt he could not go anywhere, not even Santiago, where one of his married daughters lived, whom he had not visited since he had returned. Ibáñez felt as though he was living "a monk's life... doing odd jobs here in Linares... if it were not for the lack of money, I would have moved abroad for many years."¹⁴⁰

The new political scenario did not intimidate Ibáñez and, in fact, he remained in the country. In November 1932, Conrado Ríos¹⁴¹ wrote him about his return to "the bosom of the fatherland."¹⁴² Two months later, on December 28th 1932, Ibáñez responded that he would be happy to receive him at Panguilemo where he was staying: "If you come by train, please let me know two days in advance so that I can wait for you and transport you from Talca to Santa Rita." Ibáñez knew that he was being watched, and he warned his friend that the roads were replete with policemen.¹⁴³

However secluded he remained, Ibáñez was aware that his presence in the country provoked unrest and worried his enemies. Thus, Ibáñez decided to take action. In September 23, he wrote a letter to the editor of *El Imparcial* asserting that he had

¹⁴⁰ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Luis Stöppel, April 24, 1933

¹⁴¹ Conrado Ríos Gallardo (1896-1983), Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Ibáñez's first administration when he solved the outstanding issues that were still pending with Peru. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. IV, 31-32.

¹⁴² Letter from Conrado Ríos to Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, November 5, 1932

¹⁴³ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Conrado Ríos, December 28, 1932

repeatedly advised his friends, considering always the superior interest of the Republic, to abandon any idea of conspiracy to overthrow the government. Believing, as he did now, that he was serving the Republic, Ibáñez now encouraged his followers to organize and become a political entity “on the basis of ideas and principles that I deemed and do deem adequate to the political, social and economic situation that the country is living.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the editor of the newspaper *El Imparcial*, September 23, 1932

3. Coerced by the “Lion”: Ibáñez’s Exile during Alessandri’s second administration

In the elections of October 30, 1932, Alessandri defeated the candidates Hector Rodríguez, Enrique Zañartu, Marmaduke Grove, and Elías Lafertte. Due to Alessandri’s election, Conrado Ríos wrote to Ibáñez informing him that long before Alessandri arose as a possible candidate, he had had the opportunity to meet him during lunch at the home of Inés Echeverría.¹⁴⁵ At that time, they both agreed that if they had reached an agreement between Alessandri and Ibáñez during the latter’s administration, the “democratic regime that both incarnated would have been saved... This is the truth and you well know that I have always believed the same.”¹⁴⁶

Ibáñez was glad to hear that, but he said that the problem had been “that passions can outweigh patriotism and the convictions of public good.”¹⁴⁷ Actually, this does not seem so surprising. Alessandri’s biographer Robert Alexander recalls that his former private secretary Arturo Olavarria, affirmed that Ibáñez supported many of Alessandri’s principles, as including his enactment of the Labor Code and the creation of tribunals to solve problems between workers and employers.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Inés Echeverría Bello de Larraín (Iris) (1868-1949) published many low value historical literary works. Her friendship with Arturo Alessandri Palma was well known, and despite the fact she was married, many affirm that they were lovers.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Conrado Ríos to Carlos Ibáñez, December 26, 1932

¹⁴⁷ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Conrado Ríos, December 28, 1932

¹⁴⁸ Alexander, *Arturo Alessandri: A Biography*. II, 498-499.

TABLE 2: Result of the elections held October 30, 1932¹⁴⁹

Candidates	Number of votes	Percentages
Arturo Alessandri	187,914	54,78%
Héctor Rodríguez	47,207	13,76%
Enrique Zañartu	42,885	12,50%
Marmaduke Grove	60,856	17,74%
Elías Lafertte	4,128	1,20%

René Montero's testimony also helps understand Alessandri's thoughts on Ibáñez in a more comprehensive way. Ibáñez, who had been receiving contradictory information from other informants, wrote to his former secretary asking him if he could clarify what had happened in the meeting he had with, at that time, elected president Alessandri.¹⁵⁰ Montero responded, first, that he had sent a detailed account dated November 7, 1932, and that he knew that he (Ibáñez) had not received it. Second, Montero explained that, due to his pressing situation¹⁵¹ he had come forward and talked to Alessandri to reach an amicable solution. Third, Montero took the opportunity to bring up Ibáñez in the conversation.

Alessandri confessed to him, "What a great ruler would emerge if the qualities of Ibáñez and mine could be melded!" Then he added, "on behalf of the truth, he (Ibáñez) totally lacked of some of my qualities, and that he (Alessandri) lacked in a certain way,

¹⁴⁹ Urzúa Valenzuela, *Historia Política De Chile Y Su Evolución Electoral (Desde 1819 a 1992)*. 485

¹⁵⁰ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to René Montero, May 1933, *In*, Montero Moreno, *La Verdad Sobre Ibáñez*. 180

¹⁵¹ Exonerated by Minister Landa by direct instructions from Alessandri's of his position as public auctioneer, he had been assigned during the few days that lasted Blanche's administration. According to Montero himself, his self-esteem and even his honor made him arrange the interview.

some of what Ibáñez could spare.” Montero and Alessandri agreed that Ibáñez had continued many of the social and political policies of his first administration, although the latter denounced the arbitrariness of the regime. Alessandri said that Ibáñez could have accomplished all of his policy goals within the constitutional mandate, and his error had been his departure from the Constitution and neglect for the rule of law. However, this and the humiliations suffered by his family and himself, made him engaged against Ibáñez “with all the strength of my spirit.”¹⁵²

Given the disputes between the two, it is no surprise that the arrival of Alessandri to power brought new problems to Ibáñez. In February 1933, Ibáñez wrote a confidential letter to the Director General of the Internal Revenue Service in response to a summons he had received regarding the payment of his taxes. First, he apologized for not being able to obey the summons because he had nothing to declare, especially since he had spent a large part of the year outside of the country; and secondly, because he considered it improper and discourteous to sue him, a former president, in that way.¹⁵³ Ibáñez then affirmed that his only income had been his Army retirement pension decreed in June of 1932, and although he did not know the exact amount, he said that according to the balance he received from the Armed Forces retirement fund, it totaled 3,150 pesos monthly, less 970.29 pesos for taxes, insurance and other deductions. He also declared that he owned a country house in Ñuñoa (just outside Santiago), some small property in

¹⁵² Letter from René Montero to Carlos Ibáñez, July 1933, *In*, Montero Moreno, *La Verdad Sobre Ibáñez*. 184-185

¹⁵³ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the General Director of the National Tax Office, February 19, 1933

the coastal city of Cartagena, and a small farm in Linares.¹⁵⁴

In early March 1933, Ibáñez once again wrote to Conrado Ríos and reasserted the attitude he had adopted about party politics, assuming a position totally estranged from politics:

I have not only put all such activities aside, but I have also wanted, and I am endeavoring, to completely sever those ties. I want my supporters, if any, *to forget* that there is a General Ibáñez, which is convenient if they want to try to bring to light the truth about my acts in office and restore the merited prestige that my administration deserves, the purest, most conscientious and most efficient administration that Chile has had in the last 30 years...¹⁵⁵

Ibáñez did not blame the presidents who had preceded him in the office, but rather the political maneuvering that besieged them and kept them from acting. In his letter, Ibáñez also recalled the sacrifices that he had endured to “clean up the field and govern.” His desire to “renew” Chilean politics during his administration, was now the main reason for the extreme cruelty of his opponents towards him. Although Ibáñez knew that the Government watched and investigated his acts daily, he lamented that the time and resources used to this purpose could be used to prevent real problems.¹⁵⁶

General Ibáñez’ personal and economic situation became increasingly unstable especially because of the fears and political intrigues of his detractors now in the government –starting with Alessandri himself. One of the things that most concerned

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the General Director of the National Tax Office, February 19, 1933

¹⁵⁵ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Conrado Ríos, March 5, 1933

¹⁵⁶ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Conrado Ríos, March 5, 1933

Ibáñez was to assure his family's wellbeing, as he worried about finding a place to work and taking advantage of that year's crop. He searched for a farm to lease in the province of Maule, "hopefully as far away as possible from the train line," that could also prove to be profitable. He intended to work with Cayo –his eldest son Carlos from his first marriage–, and help him find a situation where he could earn a living without using the retirement pension, "since that might disappear any day given the spirit of legality and justice dominating political leaders."¹⁵⁷

Despite his seclusion from the world on the family properties owned by his wife and his lack of participation in politics, Ibáñez still had to go into exile during the early part of May 1933 because –as explained in the letters– of political intrigues against him.¹⁵⁸ It was the enactment of an extraordinary powers' law, requested by Alessandri's Administration, that again drove him into exile. The only "condition" that Ibáñez manage to negotiate, was that his retirement pension payment –his only income at the time– be at the official exchange rate. That was why he asked Pedro Letelier¹⁵⁹ to intervene in favor of his brother in-law Enrique Letelier¹⁶⁰ or his son Carlos, so they could make the appropriate arrangements for the deposit of his pension in Buenos Aires. The General requested that they pay it "in full" because, as he mentioned in the letters, Buenos Aires was extremely expensive at the time and he did not have the means to support himself.

¹⁵⁷ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Conrado Ríos, March 5, 1933

¹⁵⁸ Letter from Benjamín and Julio Barrios to Carlos Ibáñez, May 5, 1933

¹⁵⁹ Pedro Letelier Elgart (1889-1945), member of Parliament and of the Liberal Party. During Ibáñez's first administration, appointed ambassador in Mexico. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. III, 44 - 45

¹⁶⁰ Enrique Letelier Velasco, brother of Graciela Letelier, second wife of General Ibáñez

The Government's representative agreed to Ibáñez's conditions.¹⁶¹

Resigned once again to his new life in Argentina, he begged that his request be handled with urgency, because, he feared that the scarcity of resources would force him to move to Mendoza in a few months to be closer to his family and where he could live more inexpensively.¹⁶² He also regretted that he could not travel to Europe in his current situation, a lifelong dream. The letters also show that Ibáñez knew that the best solution was to reside in Buenos Aires and find a suitable occupation that could increase his income and permit him to live with his family. This was essential at least until Chile was calm and he could enjoy "the relative freedom to which all men are entitled." The General regretted that "an absolutely unfounded suspicion and jealousy makes my life impossible, even though I am completely retired since I left the Government."¹⁶³

Three months later, Ibáñez wrote to Alfredo Estevez, manager of the Army and Navy Retirement Fund, because he had not yet received a cent.¹⁶⁴ In early August, he received a letter from the Treasury General of the Republic informing him that they had processed his pension payment for the months of May and June.¹⁶⁵ July and August would also arrived more than one month late as in future occasions.¹⁶⁶

Graciela –Ibáñez's wife– accompanied him into exile to Buenos Aires. Ibáñez recalled in one of his letters that "she wanted at all costs to bring me here and she is no

¹⁶¹ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Alfredo Estévez (*Gerente de la Caja de Retiro del Ejército y Armada*), July 17, 1933

¹⁶² Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Pedro Letelier, May 15, 1933

¹⁶³ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Pedro Letelier, May 15, 1933

¹⁶⁴ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Alfredo Estévez (*Gerente de la Caja de Retiro del Ejército y Armada*), July 17, 1933

¹⁶⁵ Letter from *Tesorería General de la República* to Carlos Ibáñez, August 1, 1933

¹⁶⁶ Letter from *Tesorería General de la República* to Carlos Ibáñez, September 25, 1933

condition to be contradicted.” This was a reference to the fact that Graciela was once again pregnant, and why he preferred that she went back to Santiago so she could be with the children and her mother. The General believed that he needed first to rebuild his life there before he could explore the idea of bringing them to Argentina.¹⁶⁷ Several months later, in August of that year, he wrote to Gabriel Letelier grieving that he would not be able to see his new daughter born in mid-October.¹⁶⁸

In Buenos Aires, Ibáñez tried to remake his life by opening an office that imported Chilean products. He considered that there should be a good market for lumber, chickpeas, lentils, sulphur and several other products since a “good profit can be made on the exchange rate that can be shared with the people who cooperate in this venture in Chile.”¹⁶⁹ He started some of the businesses with Vigorena,¹⁷⁰ García Larraín and three Argentine friends.¹⁷¹

The situation that the General experienced, despite his disillusionment with politics, did not make him forget his country. He viewed with distrust the prevailing anti-military sentiment and the attitudes of Alessandri. Regarding the latter, he criticized his paradoxical attitude thusly: “in the name of civility, he is militarizing the upper classes with the help of the State [Republican Militia¹⁷²] as a means to substitute the regular

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Pedro Letelier, May 15, 1933

¹⁶⁸ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Gabriel Letelier, August 22, 1933

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Francisco Lopetegui, June 11, 1933

¹⁷⁰ Agustín Vigorena Rivera (1889-1950). Worked at the War Ministry 1921 a 1924. Designated Comptroller General 1939.

¹⁷¹ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Gabriel Letelier, July 7, 1933

¹⁷² For further reading on the Republican Militia, see Carlos Maldonado Prieto, *La Milicia Republicana – Historia De Un Ejército Civil En Chile, 1932/1936–* (Santiago: World University Service, 1988); Verónica

institutions of the Armed Forces.”¹⁷³ As a former member of the armed forces, Ibáñez foresaw the threat of a paramilitary organization, even if it was “consecrated from the balconies of the Government Palace.”¹⁷⁴ In a letter to Gabriel Letelier he highlighted how “curious” it seemed to him, that “that the same President who in his first administration invited the Army to deliberate [1924-1925], had become, by fate, a spokesman for antimilitarism.”¹⁷⁵ This attitude of Alessandri's “reactionary regime,” convinced Ibáñez at the time that his administration would not conclude its term due to an eventual and unavoidable armed confrontation.

The situation for Ibáñez became more tense by the end of the year, as he learned from Antonio Varas Espinoza, former editor of the newspaper *La Patria* in Concepción and later editor of *Los Tiempos* in Santiago, that the newspaper *La Opinión* had published a letter under his name on November 5, 1933.¹⁷⁶ The missive, addressed to an Antonio Fernández Reyes, presented a vindicating vision of General Ibáñez's administration. Since this publication disturbed the Alessandri Administration, through the Chilean Consulate in Buenos Aires the Government summoned Ibáñez and notified him of a “resolution” of the authorities that would lead to serious consequences for him. Although the sources do not inform us what the resolution was about, nor which serious consequences it had for him (it is probable to think that they threatened or even

Valdivia Ortíz de Zárate, *Las Milicias Republicanas. Los Civiles En Armas 1932-1936* (Santiago: Dirección de Bibliotecas Archivos y Museos, Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, 1992).

¹⁷³ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Humberto Arce, July 7, 1933

¹⁷⁴ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Humberto Arce, July 7, 1933

¹⁷⁵ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Humberto Arce, July 7, 1933

¹⁷⁶ Letter from Antonio Varas Espinosa to Carlos Ibáñez, November 8, 1933

suspended the payment of his pension). Ibáñez was enraged and sent a telegram to the Minister of National Defense denouncing the sanctions enforced by the Government as improper.¹⁷⁷ However, two days later the Minister answered him that the Government had given him all the facilities to reside abroad “in deference to your own tranquility and to avoid the inconveniences that political activities involving you caused to public tranquility.” The Minister also objected that the letter published was not been declared false. This was particularly important for the Government, since it demonstrated Ibáñez’s willingness to undertake new political activities that the Administration thought “harmful to you and may disturb the order and tranquility that the Government is obligated to maintain with firmness.”¹⁷⁸

The outcome was that Ibáñez sent a tough letter in response to the Minister of National Defense. First, he said that naturally he had to read the letter since it was impossible to declare it a fraud without reading it. Second, he categorically denied authorship, and stated that he did not understand the reasons that might have led its authors to contrive such a document. Nevertheless, he later added that “except for the last paragraph, there is nothing in its substance that does not interpret what I feel and think.”¹⁷⁹

The paragraph that Ibáñez did not agree with was the one, which expressed that, “the reactionaries... are trying to destroy my [Ibáñez’s] work. They are wrong: Chile could return to a dictatorship, but its undefined progress cannot allow the times’ of

¹⁷⁷ Carlos Ibáñez, telegram to the Minister of the National Defense, November 11, 1933

¹⁷⁸ Carlos Ibáñez, telegram to the Minister of the National Defense, November 11, 1933

¹⁷⁹ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the Minister of the National Defense, November 17, 1933

Barros Luco and Sanfuentes to ultimately triumph.”¹⁸⁰ Here Ibáñez was alluding to the vices of the parliamentarian system that had prevailed after the civil war of 1891, and that had actually caused the breakdown of the political system in the years 1924-1925. Furthermore, Ibáñez alleged that there was nothing in the published letter that could be considered contrary to public order or intended to incite a revolution, and that the freedom to publish and speak was guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution and the laws.

Ibáñez’s letter to the Minister not only revealed his intentions but vented his frustration. The fraudulent letter thus became “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” Bothered by the attitude adopted by the Government, the General told the Minister that, “there is not only a desire to attack me in all this, but also to use me as an instrument to mitigate errors and avoid responsibilities.” Ibáñez firmly believed that the time had come to break his silence and to defend himself. He now refused to accept the inaccuracies and the offenses of the senior government officials, “unless the truth and motive behind my acts are established and the reasons and outcome of the biased campaign that has sought and has thus far been successful in twisting them.”¹⁸¹

Remembering the events of July 26, 1931 when his political persecution had started, Ibáñez recalled his serene attitude towards the events taking place. According to him, he had stoically faced the limitless overflow of political passions, and refused despite the loyalty of the armed forces, to use the public force to contain the disorders.

¹⁸⁰ Newspaper ‘*La Opinión*’, November 5, 1933; and letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Antonio Fernández Reyes, October 13, 1933

¹⁸¹ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the Minister of the National Defense, November 17, 1933

Claiming that he had resignedly received the slander and offense of his enemies, he had impassively contemplated the results of their ambitions. Ibáñez regretted that his enemies had cleverly exploited his silence as a sign of his confession and guilt. He asserted that he was conscious that most of his compatriots were undoubtedly unaware that, when he wanted to enter the country to address the charges against him, the Government had forbade him from doing so. This prohibition continued – Ibáñez highlighted– even when “the so-called Investigating Commission of the Acts of the Dictatorship was declared dissolved,” and even though he had written to President Montero begging him to appoint a new Commission, that would continue “the most meticulous investigation to its completion.”¹⁸²

Ibáñez decided to avail himself of the opportunity to reproach the Minister for all of the various actions against him, even the most ridiculous ones made by his enemies. One of many such statements was that because he managed a stable, he thought he was capable of managing the Republic, a clear reference to the moment in his military career when he was Commander of the Calvary regiment. Lastly, he recalled that the government did not help, but rather forced him to leave the country and that the “assistance” that the Minister allegedly provided, was “to avoid the inconveniences that political activities involving me caused to public tranquility” and of which he was entirely unaware.¹⁸³

It is impossible to evaluate the merit of these accusations against Ibáñez and if the

¹⁸² Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the Minister of the National Defense, November 17, 1933

¹⁸³ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to the Minister of the National Defense, November 17, 1933

Government was using him as a scapegoat. However, it is also equally impossible to know how involved Ibáñez was in the political conspiracies in Chile, at least by the documents conserved in his archive. According to the Government, on January 3, 1934, both Grove and Ibáñez were planning a plot to bring down the Alessandri Administration. The government took care to publicize significantly compromising letters between the *ring leaders* of the new conspiracy and then presented the information to the Judiciary.¹⁸⁴

On January 26, 1934, Ibáñez responded to the charges in a letter to the Special Prosecutor, Pedro Silva. What is particularly striking is that in this letter, Ibáñez uses the same tone with which he had previously used in the letter to the Minister of National Defense. Ibáñez denied all accusations in a ‘strong and clear manner, [and asserted] that he was already accustomed to being “attributed the direction and paternity of every plot that it was believed convenient to dismiss with a mathematical regularity.”¹⁸⁵ In view of the Minister’s insistence on issuing a new summons, and due to the prohibition imposed against Ibáñez’s entry into Chile, he answered the Special Prosecutor with a defiant tone. He was willing to obey the call of justice and would do so immediately, if the Prosecutor lifted the obstacles to his entry, “more so when the government... has adopted diverse measures... precisely at times that you have publicly summoned me.” Even more, Ibáñez asserted that the Minister of the Interior had given the order to

¹⁸⁴ *El Complot Abortado. Como Ha Sido Estimado En El País. Repugnancia Que Ha Despertado En Todas Las Actividades Nacionales*, (S/p, 1934).

¹⁸⁵ *Presentación hecha al Ministro Sumariante don Pedro Silva, sobre mi pretendida participación en el ya conocido complot del 3 de enero*, January 26, 1934

Panagra Air Navigation Company not to sell him plane tickets to Chile.¹⁸⁶

One might assume that the intention of the government in all the accusations against Ibáñez –true or not– was logically to discredit the General among his supporters and the general public by making him look like a man with limitless ambition who was only interested in returning to power. If that were the intention, it was somewhat successful. Renato Valdés, for example, who had been a fierce supporter of the General until then, wrote to ask if the accusation of conspiracy could be true. He received in response a letter in which Ibáñez said that he was deeply surprised that he, “who knows me well and knows my way of thinking, would have believed and judged as true those conspiratorial rumors and those absurd falsehoods devised and seasoned by the Government itself to persecute, bother and offend me impudently, malevolently and shamelessly.”¹⁸⁷

On February 22nd through Luis García Larraín, Ibáñez sent a pamphlet to the Chilean press entitled “General Ibáñez, former President of Chile, defends himself against the persecutions of Mr. Alessandri’s Administration.”¹⁸⁸ Ibáñez explained Alessandri’s policy of conceiving accusations against him, and he charged that the government’s own failures were causing the country’s uneasiness. Ibáñez knew that the government intended to leave him without his retirement fund and continue to postpone

¹⁸⁶ *Presentación hecha al Ministro Sumariante don Pedro Silva, sobre mi pretendida participación en el ya conocido complot del 3 de enero*, January 26, 1934

¹⁸⁷ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Renato Valdés, February 9, 1934

¹⁸⁸ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Luis García Larraín, February 22, 1934. The pamphlet alluded is the following: Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, *El General Ibáñez, Ex-Presidente De Chile, Se Defiende De Las Persecuciones Del Gobierno Del Sr. Alessandri* (Buenos Aires: S/P, 1934).

his possibility of coming back to Chile. He was convinced and decided not to think about returning, as Chile suffered the consequences of a “truly malignant tumor that the presence of Mr. Alessandri represented,” for as long as “El León” had freedom of political action in the Republic.¹⁸⁹

The persecution of opponents by Alessandri’s administration also reached beyond Chile into Argentina. Through the Minister of Foreign Relations of Chile, the Argentine Ministry of the Interior received a request for the “internment” of the Chilean citizens General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, Pablo Ramírez¹⁹⁰ and Agustín Vigorena. The argument forwarded was that they were in bordering provinces of the country and that they had participated in a plot against the constituted authorities of the Republic.¹⁹¹ The Chilean government appealed to “international doctrine” and the Montevideo Treaty so Argentina might take measures to prevent the exiles from performing acts that could compromise the good relations of the international community. They requested that neighboring countries restrict the places of residence of the refugees, so they would be as far as possible from the borders.¹⁹² General Ibáñez as well as Agustín Vigorena appealed the resolution, which put them further away from their fatherland. Undoubtedly, it also placed them in an uncomfortable situation in the country that had given them shelter. The

¹⁸⁹ Letter from Gabriel Letelier to Carlos Ibáñez, February 24, 1934

¹⁹⁰ Pablo Ramírez Rodríguez (1886-1949), first Comptroller General of the Republic (1927). During Ibáñez’s first administration, appointed Minister of Finance and also of Industry and Colonization. Ramón Folch, *Biografías De Chilenos 1876-1973. Miembros De Los Poderes Ejecutivo, Legislativo Y Judicial*. IV, 11

¹⁹¹ Leopoldo Melo, *Decreto del Ministro del Interior n° 3.473 de la República Argentina*, January 15, 1934

¹⁹² Leopoldo Melo, *Decreto del Ministro del Interior n° 3.473 de la República Argentina*, January 15, 1934

Argentinean government only lifted the restriction after January 25, 1937.¹⁹³

Several years later, when Ibáñez recalled these events in an interview to Luis Correa Prieto, he remembered this passage. His recollection, however, is not consistent with the account above. First, he thought that it might have taken place in 1932 when it was actually one year later. Second, in the interview Ibáñez also recalled the request for “internment.” However, he adds something excluded from other sources. It seems that the Alessandri’s administration also requested that the Chilean exiles should stay also away from the Federal Capital. The probable reason was to isolate them from politicians and people of influence and even from Chileans who visited and lived in the capital. Additionally it might restrict their access to resources. In the same interview, Ibáñez claims that the Argentine Minister of the Interior, Leopoldo Melo, told him that if the Chilean government insisted on its demands, they (the Chilean exiles) should move to the *barrio de San Isidro*, “a suburb of the city that left him outside the radius of the Federal Capital.”¹⁹⁴ This kind of influence was what the Alessandri’s administration wanted to avoid, pushing the Chilean exiles, mainly Ibáñez, away from the center of power.

While his detractors had not forgotten him, the situation in Argentina seemed to be changing. On April 18, 1934, an Argentinean officer of the court, Ramón M. Alcina, appointed Carlos Ibáñez as a judicial trustee of a 75,000-hectare ranch. The ranch was located in Catrilo, on the eastern Pampa of Argentina at more than 550 kms from Buenos Aires near the town of Carhué. The officer of the court assigned Ibáñez ample authority

¹⁹³ Record nº 40.908.I.1936, January 25, 1937, *Ministerio del Interior de la República Argentina*

¹⁹⁴ Correa Prieto, *El Presidente Ibáñez, La Política Y Los Políticos. Apuntes Para La Historia*. 155-156

to collect interest on the assets, to issue receipts, to make leases and perform any type of function.¹⁹⁵ The General, who was not a stranger to either the field of administration, engaged himself completely in the new enterprise entrusted to him. However, when his employment did not go as expected, Ibáñez presented his resignation nearly one year later, after approval of the statement of accounts submitted by the trusteeship on May 31, 1935. As he recounts in his report, he faced a number of challenges, including changing weather, lost harvests, and little support from what seems to have been a sort of agricultural cooperative organized as a colony.¹⁹⁶

Commenting to his former personal secretary René Montero about this enterprise, Ibáñez said that there were strong interests behind the ranch in Catrilo. However, this did not mean he had solved his economic problems though his salary would help him overcome better his expenditures. Regrettably, the Alessandri administration accused him once again of plotting a coup against the government and suspended the payment of his pension. Now, his only means to subsist were his own meager savings. However, he believed that “it could be the time that Justice remembers me... restoring what is owed to me... hopefully before I have to live on the streets.” Regarding the new accusations, Ibáñez commented and insisted that he was no longer involved in politics, especially after the last outrages that had left him without his pension. No longer would he defend

¹⁹⁵ *El Mercurio*, 4 de abril de 1934. Also: *Esquema para el informe de la administración del concurso Migliore correspondiente al período de abril 1934 a abril 1935*.

¹⁹⁶ *Esquema para el informe de la administración del concurso Migliore correspondiente al período de abril 1934 a abril 1935*.

himself even if “all conspire against me.”¹⁹⁷

There is little information from Ibáñez’s correspondence for the years 1935, 1936 and 1937. However, he did leave a small diary that runs from mid-April to July 15, 1935 revealing general information about his daily life. He was living in an apartment at Viamonte 1345. It had two rooms and a bathroom, a hall, a relatively good-sized dining room “beside a small gallery through which the sun shown at certain times.” It also had a gas stove, a room for a maid and a bathroom with a shower, “both small and dark that appeared unfit for human beings to live in.” There was hot water all year round and a heating system that in winter worked until 10:00 p.m.¹⁹⁸

Noteworthy in the diary is Ibáñez’s ongoing contact with other Chileans, former collaborators of his like Vigorena or Ramírez, and some who were just passing by and wanted to meet with the former President of the Republic. During this period, Ibáñez’s diary makes continuous reference to his wife, who accompanied him in this exile. He went out walking with her or to see movies, such as *When Love Dies*. They were always going out to have dinner with friends. Some of those outings made him remember his country and they had a “very good time, but I ate a lot and felt ill from the afternoon into the evening.” There was always someone enthusiastic about proposing a business, such as organizing a Chilean-Argentine oil company to exploit oil fields near Chaco.¹⁹⁹ However, the recurrent subject was undoubtedly the situation and news from Chile. The diary reveals how Ibáñez worried and constantly sought any news of his country.

¹⁹⁷ Montero Moreno, *La Verdad Sobre Ibáñez*. 185-186

¹⁹⁸ Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, *Diario en Buenos Aires, 17 de abril, al 15 de julio de 1935*.

¹⁹⁹ Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, *Diario en Buenos Aires, 17 de abril, al 15 de julio de 1935*.

In his memoirs, Aquiles Vergara Vicuña provides another insight into Ibáñez's exile in Argentina. Through an epistolary exchange started at the beginnings of 1936, he shows how an additional interest had captured his old acquaintance's attention: Paraguayan-Bolivian relations.²⁰⁰ During Ibáñez's administration, Vergara was a member of his cabinet but had finally fallen away from him in 1927 due to political disagreements. Their discrepancy had increased as the former published a two-volume book called *Ibáñez, César criollo* at the end of 1931.²⁰¹ In the words of one historian, this book caused quite a stir.²⁰² Vergara's opportunism to publish a book in which he attacked his former superior, only discredited himself. Soon after Ibáñez's downfall, Vergara undertook a self-imposed exile in Bolivia from where he never returned. There he built a prominent position in the army of that country (he fought in the Chaco War), and become an activist for the vindication for Bolivia's rights for a corridor to the Pacific.²⁰³

The ideals that at some point made them work together, once again appealed to Ibáñez and Vergara. Through a common Chilean military acquaintance that lived in La Paz but traveled regularly to Buenos Aires, the General suggested that Vergara write him. The latter was surprised and incredulous given what had happened six years earlier, especially after the publishing of his (insidious) book. However, the contact insisted that the ex-President had read it and had commented that, he "was right on many of my

²⁰⁰ Aquiles Vergara Vicuña, *Cosas Y Quisicosas De Un Problema Americano (Criba De Recuerdos)* (La Paz, Bolivia 1963). 479

²⁰¹ ———, *Ibáñez, César Criollo*, 2 vols. (Santiago: Imprenta La Sud-América, 1931).

²⁰² Vial Correa, *Historia De Chile (1891 - 1973)*. 15

²⁰³ For further reading on Aquiles Vergara besides his multi-volum memoirs, see Leonardo Jeffs Castro, *Aquiles Vergara Vicuña, Perfil Biográfico De Un Hombre Íntegro* (Santiago: Ediciones del Instituto Chileno-Boliviano de Cultura, 1995).

assertions, and even if I disagreed and rejected others.” Ibáñez understood how he came to those erroneous conclusions, both by circumstances and by the vehemence of Vergara’s character.²⁰⁴ Taking this into consideration, Vergara, who until that moment did not see any immediate reason to address Ibáñez, questioned the purpose of the General to his Chilean military acquaintance.²⁰⁵

Ex-President Ibáñez, Vergara explains in his memoirs, was aware that in Bolivia a new movement was emerging among young progressive intellectuals and ex-combatants of the Chaco war.²⁰⁶ The origins of this movement were in “the trenches and sufferings of the conflict,” and from its inception it promoted a new social conscience and a new economic nationalism focused on maritime reintegration. Vergara added that Ibáñez believed that this new ideology found support in a strengthened, trained and proven military organization, and it would not be long before it moved toward a goal of Bolivia’s regaining a port on the Pacific by the taking of Arica. This no doubt would be particularly dangerous to Chile.²⁰⁷

It is a fact that Arica had never belonged to Bolivia. Bolivians, however, had always considered that port a natural projection of their territory to the Pacific Ocean. In the nineteenth century, they had unsuccessfully tried to negotiate its acquisition from

²⁰⁴ Vergara Vicuña, *Cosas Y Quisicosas De Un Problema Americano (Criba De Recuerdos)*. 480

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ The Chaco War was the conflict that confronted Bolivia and Paraguay for the Chaco region . This area had never been reclaimed by either country. However, for Bolivia, after the War of the Pacific, its importance raised as it allowed them access to the Atlantic Ocean through the Paraguay River. The problem arose between the two countries as it was thought that this region was rich in oil.

²⁰⁷ Vergara Vicuña, *Cosas Y Quisicosas De Un Problema Americano (Criba De Recuerdos)*. 481

Peru in exchange for other territories.²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, in Bolivia there was the long lasting idea that Chile would do anything to jeopardize its development given existing resentment of the outcome of the War of the Pacific (1879-1884). The port of Antofagasta was never a reliable possibility for Bolivian takeover, since by the time the Chilean troops occupied it in 1879 during the war, the Bolivian population there was less than 5% (the rest of the population was in fact Chilean). Therefore, to believe that Bolivia's stagnation started with its landlocked condition after the 1879-1884 conflict is an error.²⁰⁹

Aquiles Vergara was certain that during Ibáñez's long exile in Argentina, he had gained interest in the political evolution of Bolivia. According to Vergara, this concern went back to his last administration, when Ibáñez had signed with President Augusto Leguía of Peru the Treaty of Lima of 1929. This treaty had ended the last pending bordering disagreements from the War of the Pacific between the two countries. However, Vergara believed that Ibáñez's conscience troubled him because Bolivia, the other country involved in the conflict, was excluded from the negotiations and that Chile had compromised the wellbeing of its neighbor. Chile had added an annex to the treaty that stated that the governments of Peru and Chile could not, without prior agreement, transfer to a third power (Bolivia) all or part of the territories occupied by Chile during and after the war. This left Bolivia with no possible solution to regaining a port on the

²⁰⁸ Guillermo Lagos Carmona, *Historia De Las Fronteras De Chile*, 2^a ed., 4 vols. (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1980).

²⁰⁹ William F. Sater, *Chile and the War of the Pacific* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); ———, *Andean Tragedy : Fighting the War of the Pacific, 1879-1884*, Studies in War, Society, and the Military. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

Pacific.²¹⁰ Nevertheless, Aquiles Vergara was incorrect in suggesting that the former President if not precisely remorseful by his behavior in the matter of the treaty, he seemed determined to rectify its most visible pernicious effects on Bolivia.²¹¹ Chile and Peru had done nothing other than protect their mutual interests, but Bolivia and Vergara saw this as one step further in the goal to reach an outlet to the sea.

In a letter dated May 22, 1936, Ibáñez made Aquiles Vergara understand that the restoration of their old friendship should be based on negotiation with higher-ranking officers of the Bolivian Army to seek a mutual understanding between the two countries.²¹² Vergara contacted the respective authorities and analyzed Ibáñez's offer. Unfortunately, Vergara does not tell us what kind of solutions were proposed, but he says that they finally decided to go forward with the talks. However, later Vergara submitted a dissenting opinion given that one of the parties was somewhat "out of play," since Ibáñez was in exile, and that situation was unlikely to change in the near future. Now, Vergara believed, Ibáñez lacked official political influence, though he recognized that he had a wide influence on the Chilean public opinion.²¹³

The political circumstances in Bolivia was going through severe political upheavals due to problems resulting from the Chaco War. This situation prompted Vergara to hasten any possible understanding. Soon after, President Tejada Sorzano was

²¹⁰ Vergara Vicuña, *Cosas Y Quisicosas De Un Problema Americano (Criba De Recuerdos)*. 481-482. The Treaty of Lima and its supplementary Protocols (Lima, June 3, 1929) can be read on the official web of the Peruvian Congress <http://www.congreso.gob.pe/comisiones/1999/exteriores/chile/TRALIMA.htm>

²¹¹ Ibid. 486

²¹² Ibid. 487

²¹³ Ibid. 488

forced to leave power after a coup d'état led by Major Germán Busch. Immediately after, the latter installed in the presidency one of the military men who was conducting the negotiations with Ibáñez.²¹⁴ This radically changed the picture. Vergara explains how the new president, David Toro (the same one Ibáñez supposedly met at Buenos Aires), bound by the rules of procedure of foreign relations that are common to heads of state, suspended any unofficial approach and entrusted Vergara to take the matter to the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bolivia²¹⁵.

The change of course in the political situation of Bolivia made it impossible for any attempt to go forward with the negotiations. The newly assigned Foreign Affairs Minister, Enrique Baldivieso, explained to Vergara that he thought that Chilean President Arturo Alessandri already suspected what had happened behind his back and that could create a delicate situation to the new regime. Moreover, after 1935, President Alessandri and the President of Argentina were jointly conducting a peace treaty between Bolivia and Paraguay.²¹⁶

In light of this, Vergara offered Baldivieso on behalf of General Ibáñez, to suspend the dialogue that “could have led to closer correspondence between the Bolivian and Chilean General.”²¹⁷ Vergara wondered at the time that if in the future Ibáñez “whose political horizon was far from being overshadowed,” would be consistent with the concept of revision of that “fateful wretched agreement forged by him in the Appendix of

²¹⁴ Ibid. 493-494

²¹⁵ Ibid.495

²¹⁶ Arturo Alessandri, *Recuerdos De Gobierno*, 3 vols. (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1967). III, 105-164

²¹⁷ Vergara Vicuña, *Cosas Y Quisicosas De Un Problema Americano (Criba De Recuerdos)*. 495

the Treaty of Lima.”²¹⁸ However, he regretted that that Ibáñez did not maintain his altered view but went back to previous position. Prove of this was that years later, and with Ibáñez once again as head of state, Vergara highlighted that in various statements Ibáñez insisted on “a narrow and myopic view” of the maritime aspiration of the neighboring nation, a “desire that some years ago he had estimated fair and had encouraged eloquently and decisively.”²¹⁹

What were Ibáñez’s truly intensions behind his approach to Bolivian military? It is hard to believe that he might have had any remorse regarding the understanding that his administration reached with Peru as refer by Vergara. Even more, of his foreign policy, the Treaty of Lima of 1929 constituted one of the main achievements of his government. It is also inconceivable why any Bolivian authorities went ahead with the talks, taking into consideration that Ibáñez as Vergara pointed out was at all moments “out of play” in his exile in Argentina. Was Ibáñez stubbornly looking to open an international front to Alessandri’s administration? Ibáñez’s archive is silent about this.

By October 1936, Ibáñez left the apartment in Buenos Aires and moved back to an old boarding house where he had lived before. In December, he returned to a house in the Pocitos sector and in mid-January 1937, the Argentine Government lifted the prohibition that had restricted his free movement through Argentine provinces. In early January, Ibáñez went to Uruguay. Upon his return to Argentina, he wrote to Conrado Ríos to say that what *El Debate* newspaper had published in that country could only be a

²¹⁸ Ibid. 496

²¹⁹ Ibid. 497

“move” by the Alessandri Administration, as the article linked him to communist activities.

This had logically given some sectors of the Argentine press reason to make disparaging comments about Ibáñez and his Government, and that was why “I was the subject of very tight police scrutiny for some time, my most minor activities were controlled as if I were a very dangerous criminal.”²²⁰ This made the General regret that in 1925 he had confronted the responsibilities of bringing Alessandri back after he had been overthrown, and so he could implement “his beautiful program of justice and social vindication that he had promised in his campaign of 1920.”²²¹ Ibáñez then insisted that his actual situation “was one of the worst: politically, economically and socially, because I could not live with my family and had to raise my children far from me and their mother.” Lastly, he regretted that it had been a mistake not to organize a civil force that would take over the legacy of the revolution of January 23rd of 1925, which had consolidated his political role and ideals, and the government program that he had designed.²²²

²²⁰ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Conrado Ríos, January 19, 1937

²²¹ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Conrado Ríos, January 19, 1937

²²² Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Conrado Ríos, January 19, 1937

4. *Final considerations*

By mid-1937, Ibáñez was able to return permanently to Chile. Once settled, he wrote to his old comrade and friend, Julio Salinas, who had stayed in El Salvador after he and Ibáñez had completed a military mission there at the beginning of the 1900s. In the letter, he summarized what had happened and what the last six years had meant to him. Ibáñez expressed that after he had left power in 1931, an epoch of continuous disorder had reached the country, and Governments rose and fell in quick succession, victims of the prevailing confusion and chaos. The main causes of these problems had been, he then added, the struggles of the different political currents over the predominance of power.²²³

Ibáñez also expressed an awareness that many of his close collaborators and friends had suffered during this period. Even he had had to pay the price, not only of being unable to return to the country and to his family, but also not being able to defend the achievements of his administration and the honor of the people that had worked with him. He said that “only now, after six years, I can return to my people, to finally meet my youngest daughter that I had only met by a photograph, and my other one that follows her in age and that I left when she was only three months old.”²²⁴

Regarding his future, Ibáñez explained that he had resigned from all political activity, “as my desires are to live serenely within my family the years that I have left of life.” He had no desire to be an “obstructionist” factor in the political turmoil in the country. His sole desire was that in the next presidential election, the country could find

²²³ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Julio A. Salinas, November 20, 1937

²²⁴ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Julio A. Salinas, November 20, 1937

someone “honest, patriotic, and able to meet the needs of the people.”²²⁵

Just a couple of months later, Ibáñez, the man “who had no political desires” was proclaimed presidential candidate for the 1938 presidential election. As Rene Montero pointed out to him in a letter in June of 1932 in which he advised Ibáñez not to return to country, “To hate you with all the venom that the human heart can summon, or to lift him up as an emblem of salvation,”²²⁶ he would continue for an indefinite period to be a public man. In fact, Montero added, “In this you are more naïve than the country. You are still admired, feared or hated, so you are not indifferent to Chile. You should, therefore, give up your condition of simple citizen and think about how the public man best serves his country.”²²⁷ His apparent retirement from politics did not convince his adversaries—and even his own supporters—, that he would henceforth remain on the margins of politics.

Was Ibáñez the same man in 1937 as the ex President who had left in 1931? At first, his exile had turned into a desperate defense of his fallen administration. Then, he had made considerable efforts to return and stay in the country, despite his internal dichotomy if to engage once again in politics. Finally, at a last stage, he realized that his political ideals were much more than his fallen administration. His apparent disgrace, his “absence” that had made him a somehow invisible and omnipresent actor, led him to be proclaimed presidential candidate shortly after he had returned to the country in 1937. He was not just the candidate of any group, but of the neo-fascist movement.

²²⁵ Letter from Carlos Ibáñez to Julio A. Salinas, November 20, 1937

²²⁶ “Para odiarlo con toda la ponzoña que puede albergar el Corazón humano, o para levantarlo como una enseña de salvación”

²²⁷ Letter from René Montero to Carlos Ibáñez, June 1932. In, Montero Moreno, *La Verdad Sobre Ibáñez*. 180

The events that followed Ibáñez's presidential candidacy ended in a somehow confusing incident of which the public opinion held him accountable. Young members of the National Socialist Party –of the same neo-fascist movement that supported Ibáñez candidacy– conducted a putsch (September 5, 1938) to overthrow the Alessandri's administration just two months before the elections were held. The armed men divided in two groups, occupied the main buildings of *the Universidad de Chile* and of the *Seguro Obrero*, the latter just across the street from La Moneda. Their hope was that other subversive groups would join their efforts following their initiative. Soon they realized that their effort had been in vain. After the police fired a canon against the main doors of the University, the first group surrenders their arms and the building. The police forces made them walked a couple of blocks with their hands up as a sign of surrender, and into the other building where their comrades were still locked up and where they had to convince them to lay down their arms. It was then, that Alessandri gave the order to the police that there should be no survivors. The putsch was a total fiasco and Ibáñez's responsibility never clarified. Sixty-three young men in their early twenties were killed and Ibáñez, who had no active participation at least in the events, withdrew his candidacy.

The 1938 elections was, for the first time in Chilean history, the election in which left and right, as political ideologies of right and wrong, confronted. For the rightwing parties, Alessandri gave his obstinate and full support to his former Finance Minister, Gustavo Ross Santa María. The left on the other hand, following the political strategies of popular fronts designed after the VII Congress of the Communist International, proclaimed

the candidacy of Pedro Aguirre Cerda. These fronts, the where organized by the local Communist Party of each country, had as main mission to arrange wide political fronts of “progressive forces,” in order to confront rightwing and fascists fronts. It had triumphed in France in 1935, and in Spain in 1936 it ultimately led to the civil war. This is why it was more surprising that when Ibáñez pull out his candidacy, he gave his decisive support to them. His supporters did not question his position. Ibáñez’s political ideals, as in his first administration, crossed over the whole political spectrum.

Finally, returning to that lunch held in Buenos Aires in the 1930s, we can see that the profound social and political transformations of the era were what led to the emergence of leaders such as Vargas, the Peron, the Trujillo the Ubico, and Ibáñez. These were times, which called for profound social and political transformations. Not all of these leaders were military men, and not all reached power by non-democratic means to impose their ideas. They did not even have a common project, although most were nationalists. However, all their countries suffered the ravages of political systems in crisis exacerbated by economic turmoil. All these men tried in one way or another to take advantage of their personal and/or national interest, and in doing so, they inevitably transformed Latin America. Ibáñez’s exile and how his absence from the country played a fundamental role in his transformation, may help better understand the character these men played in the political transformations of the continent and how they evolved.

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