

= Irene Morales =

Irene Morales Infante (1 April 1865 ? 25 August 1890) was a Chilean soldier who served in the War of the Pacific . She was born in a barrio of Santiago , and lived in poverty throughout her life , working as a seamstress from an early age . At the time the War of the Pacific began she was only 13 years old , and had been orphaned and twice widowed . Her second husband was executed by the Bolivian military for killing a soldier . She tried to pass herself as a man and enlist as a soldier in the Chilean Army . This failed , but she was given a position as an unofficial cantinière and military nurse , marching alongside the infantrymen to sell food and drink , and caring for the wounded after battles .

Despite being given a noncombatant role , she fought alongside the men of her unit in the battles of the Tarapacá Campaign in late 1879 , at Pisagua and San Francisco . Her valor in these battles and her care for wounded men drew the attention of Chilean commander @-@ in @-@ chief Manuel Baquedano , who provided her with official recognition and the rank of a sergeant . She continued to serve in the army for the duration of the war and was famously courageous at the Battle of Tacna in 1880 . After the war , she returned to civilian life and died in obscurity , aged only 25 . Now considered one of Chile 's greatest heroes of the war , her service only became widely known after her death .

= = Early life = =

Morales was born on 1 April 1865 in La Chimba , a barrio on the Mapocho River in Santiago de Chile , the daughter of carpenter Ventura Morales and Marta Infante . Her father died when she was young , and she moved with her mother to Valparaíso . There she started to learn her mother 's trade as a seamstress until her mother married her to an older man in 1877 , at age 11 . Her husband died during the first year of their marriage , and her mother died about the same time .

Left without any family , Morales headed for Antofagasta , then a port town in Bolivia that was booming due to the nitrate mines in the area . She travelled there as a steerage passenger , with a ticket she bought by selling nearly all of her possessions . While working there , she met Santiago Pizarro , a Chilean in his 30s who made his living in a Bolivian military band , and married him in mid @-@ 1878 , aged 13 . He was tried and executed on 21 September of that year for killing a Bolivian soldier in a drunken brawl . She found his body dumped by the side of the railway tracks and took a gold ring from his finger , which she wore for the rest of her life . Pizarro 's execution was widely protested by the mostly Chilean population of Antofagasta , which resented what was seen as an unjust Bolivian government .

= = Military service = =

On 14 February 1879 , Chilean forces entered Antofagasta to the welcome of most of the local population , beginning the War of the Pacific against Bolivia and Peru . Many locals enlisted in the Chilean Army , and Morales enlisted as a soldier to avenge her husband by disguising herself as a man and slipping in unnoticed amid the frenzy of patriotism .

Her deception did not last long , for Capt. Hermógenes Cámus saw through her disguise immediately ? because of her curved figure and " feminine beauty , " he said . Nonetheless , he allowed her to be an unauthorised army cantinière and nurse . These were the only positions available to women in the army at the time , and many women effectively served as both , which Morales did . As a cantinière , she sold food and drink to supplement soldiers ' monotonous basic rations , staying with them at their camp and marching with them on operations , and since she was a nurse , she had to be present immediately after battles to care for the wounded .

Morales was first sent to Cámus 's unit , the 3rd Regiment of the Line , which was at the front of Chile 's campaigns during much of the war . Although she officially was not a soldier and was not supposed to participate in combat , this did not deter her from fighting alongside the men of her regiment . Indeed , she was noted for her great skill with a rifle . She fought at the amphibious

landing and fierce ensuing assault on a Peruvian position of the Battle of Pisagua on 2 November 1879 and at the Battle of San Francisco on 19 November . She was looked up to by the men of her unit for her selfless nursing of the wounded after battles . She also put herself at risk several times to save captured Peruvian soldiers from being abused by her compatriots .

Hearing of her deeds , the commander @-@ in @-@ chief of Chile 's military , General Manuel Baquedano , summoned Morales to meet him and officially authorised her to wear the uniform of a cantinière (as she had done so without authorisation before) and gave her the rank and pay of a sergeant (sargento segundo , lit . " second sergeant ") . She later moved to the 4th Division , in which she served during the Tacna and Arica Campaign . At the Battle of Tacna on 26 May 1880 , she continued to provide water to the exhausted men at the front lines after she received a slight wound herself . She was one of the first soldiers to enter the city of Tacna that evening , and soldiers of the Carabineros de Yungay cavalry regiment recalled her riding into the town on a horse , raising her rifle as they passed by and crying " Viva Chile ! " . After the battle , she was stricken for some time with an illness she picked up from prisoners of war she had cared for , and she wrote a letter to a friend of hers in Antofagasta , assuming she was on her deathbed . Nonetheless , later writers said she was present at the Battle of Arica two weeks later and ordered the mass killing of captured Peruvians , an account also inscribed on a Peruvian memorial to the dead . During January 1881 , she fought at the Battle of Chorillos and Battle of Miraflores and was among the Chileans who entered Lima after the city was captured .

While all her contemporaries in Chile recognised her heroism , and the common soldiers she served with looked up to her as the " nun of charity , " some men said Morales had gone too far for a woman by taking up a rifle . Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna praised her for her dedication and bravery and for her hatred for those who killed her husband , but in 1881 gave her the free advice that she should not put herself at such risk and should " return quietly to her poor home and restart the life of a real woman in manual labor , in caring for her relatives , in work with the needle and thimble , and exchange , after several years of adventures and passions , the revolver for her honored and beloved sewing machine . " She did not follow this advice and remained in the army until the end of the war , fighting in the Battle of Huamachuco on 10 July 1883 , the last battle of the war . Men like Mackenna were right to say she put herself at unusual risk for a woman at the time , for several other Chilean cantinières were killed after being captured by Peruvians during the war .

= = Later life and legacy = =

After the end of the war , Morales returned to her birthplace of Santiago . While few knew of her actions during the war , the men she served alongside remembered her well . When she appeared at the unveiling of the monument to the common Chilean roto at the Plaza Yungay , she received some of the most enthusiastic applause . After years of illness , she died in anonymity in the common room of a Santiago hospital on 25 August 1890 , aged only 25 . For her , widespread recognition came only after her death .

On 25 August 1930 , 40 years after her death , Col. Enrique Phillips wrote an article dedicated to her in El Mercurio that brought her into attention , in which he praised her in the highest terms , saying : " The Judiths of Chile were many in that glorious time , but none exceeded in valour Irene Morales , the paragon of Chilean women . " In the years after her death , a number of poems were written on her , including one by Rómulo Larrañaga , and she was featured in many works of patriotic literature . A street near the Plaza Baquedano in Santiago is named in her honour , the Calle Irene Morales . During the turbulent years of the 1970s , she was among the historical Chilean women embraced as symbols by both conservative and left @-@ wing women 's political organisations . In modern times , she has been described as one of Chile 's " greatest heroes " of the War of the Pacific . Her remains are kept in the Military Mausoleum at the Cementerio General de Santiago , which is maintained by the Chilean Army .

Morales is often compared to Candelaria Pérez , a Chilean cantinière of the earlier War of the Confederation who was also praised for her courage and who also came from La Chimba .