

cool, winters long, cold and wet. The combined effect of the cold Humboldt Current off the coast of Chile and the relative narrowness of land between the coast and the snow-covered Andean peaks to the east, moderates what might otherwise be a very warm climate. Summer (December - March) in Santiago is long and dry with an average temperature of 28°C. In the rainy season from May to August, the temperature drops to an average of 12°C.

History and Government

The central portion of modern Chile originally was the territory of the Araucanian Indians and was not permanently settled by the Spaniards until 1540 under Pedro de Valdivia. (An attempt in 1535 was repulsed by the Indians.) On February 12, 1541, Valdivia established a settlement which he called Santiago on the spot where he had defeated an Araucanian force. Indians of this same tribe captured and tortured him to death 14 years later. Despite repeated attempts, the Araucanians were not conquered by the settlers, but in 1877, by treaty, they were incorporated along with their land, into Chile.

In 1810, led by General Bernardo O'Higgins, the son of a Spanish viceroy to Peru, and aided by General San Martin of Argentina, Chile revolted against Spanish rule and proclaimed its independence. Spain battled intermittently against the revolutionaries until 1818, when Chile was declared an independent republic under O'Higgins. It was not officially recognized as an independent country by Spain until 1844.

Between 1838 and 1886, Chile fought and won three wars: the 1838-1839 conflict against Peru; the 1879-1883 conflict against Bolivia when Chile acquired its northern nitrate and copper-rich provinces; and the war of 1886 with Peru in a naval battle against the Spanish fleet.

Chile is ruled by a military government headed by President Augusto Pinochet Ugarte. A new constitution adopted by plebiscite in 1980 confirms the present government's mandate until March 1989 when elections are to be held. The constitution also