

Stay Tuned:
Television and Society in Chile
from 1951 to 1989

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Introduction:

The scene opens on an old black and white television screen. Images of Pinochet congratulating the 1982 Chilean World Cup team flicker on and off, while members of the Herrera Lopez family whack the malfunctioning machine. Fast forward a few minutes, the family patriarch, Juan, asks a salesman about the prices of various color TV models. The salesman introduces the concept of paying for the TV in installments with credit. Juan responds, "*Nunca he comprado a crédito/ I've never bought on credit.*" Unfazed the salesman muses, "*Bueno mire, piénselo como regalo para su familia. Imagine su señora, el cabro chico¹.*" Okay, look, think of it as a gift for your family. Imagine your wife, your kid." Despite Juan's initial trepidation, the salesman's words are fortuitous: the show ends with the family gathered around the dinner table watching the news on a color TV.

These scenes are from the first episode of *Los 80* a Chilean TV show set in the 1980s during the Pinochet dictatorship. Canal 13, the second oldest TV channel in Chile, broadcasted the show in 2008 to celebrate Chile's bicentennial, to much success. The show ran for seven seasons and attracted over four million viewers at its height.² Canal 13's decision to create a show about the 80s for their celebration of Chile's 200-year history may seem arbitrary but made sense in various ways. That decade witnessed major social, political, and economic transitions. A large proportion of the viewing public in 2008 had lived through that decade, which expanded viewership. Equally important, and particularly for a TV station, television was the medium of the era. Television reached saturation levels

¹ Cabro is Chilean slang for a small child or kid

² "Los 80 Lidera En Rating Con El Cierre de Su Sexta Temporada," *La Tercera*, accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/los-80-lidera-en-rating-con-el-cierre-de-su-sexta-temporada/>.

in Chilean society in the beginning of the 1980s. In 1970, only 19% of homes in Chile had a radio and TV, but by 1982 95% of homes had a TV, a quarter of them in color.³ In fact as demand for other forms of media from books to magazines to movies fell, purchases of TVs skyrocketed.⁴ Programming expanded from 3 to 5 hours in the evenings during the 1960s to running over 12 hours daily in the 1980s.⁵ TVs became household staples. Juan's main conflict of obtaining a color TV in *Los 80's* first episode pays homage to the time that television cemented itself into Chile's daily life, and the TV motif extends through the show's seven seasons providing a glimpse into that era's most important events. In a bit of meta-commentary those repeated images of a TV within a TV also call into question how TV media influenced the characters of *Los 80's* perception of Chile and through the characters how modern Chileans reconstruct their collective history.

In this thesis I plan to examine how TV grew from a plaything of the elite at its inception to a vehicle of mass media by the 1988 plebiscite. Through this process the Pinochet regime's contradictory desire to maintain ownership of channels while embracing laissez-faire, neoliberal economics created a viewer focused TV industry that backfires, politically. Chapter One provides historical and economic context while analyzing how state control and economic policies have always influenced Chilean TV and were amplified under the neoliberal policies of Pinochet. Chapter Two examines how telenovelas brought about a new era of domestic content creation focused on escapism that relied on viewer feedback. Chapter Three focuses on the variety show format's ability to thrive in a neoliberal market and the consumerist values it promotes. Chapter Four analyzes the role

³ Chile ING, "La Familia Chilena en el Tiempo" *Estadísticas del Bicentenario*, Dec. 2010.

⁴ Valerio Fuenzalida, *Estudios sobre la Televisión Chilena* (Santiago: Corporación de Promoción Universitaria, 1981).

⁵ "Guía," *TV RAMA*, March 1982.

of television in the 1988 No campaign as a culmination of economic and social expertise gathered and used to bring down the Pinochet dictatorship.

A Historiography:

Television and mass media studies primarily fall under the purview of communications and sociology departments in Chile. This thesis will use many of these studies as evidence of how audiences responded and interacted with the creative content they saw on TV. One of the leading experts in Chilean telecommunications, Valerio Fuenzalida, a professor of communications at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, extensively studied the reception of TV in Chile from the perspective of the audience. He mainly uses a psychological and sociological method. His *Televisión y cultura cotidiana* published in 1997 surveyed audience response to creative content such as telenovelas and cartoons, and his *Estudios sobre la televisión chilena* is a compilation of mass media studies done in the before the dictatorship on audience reception. It is important to note that university rectors were also members of the Junta and restricted many academic studies that could potentially criticize the regime's media censorship practices.⁶ As a result, academics like Fuenzalida often did research through think tanks like *Centro de Indagación y Expresión Cultural y Artística* (CENECA) that funded a wide variety of research on media and society under the guise of helping Chile's media companies further develop and target their content.⁷ Therefore, most of the studies that take place during the dictatorship are

⁶ Valerio Fuenzalida, "Estudios de Audencia y Reception en Chile," <http://www.eca.usp.br/associa/alaic/boletim20/valeriof.htm>

⁷ According to Mara Elena Hermsilla's *Evaluation de la Experiencia de CENECA en recepción activa de la televisión* (Santiago, Chile: CENECA, 1989) the think tank's slogan was "Comunicación y Cultural para el desarrollo/ Communication and Culture for development."

focused on relatively non-controversial issues like the potential of TV as a tool for early childhood education.

After Pinochet stepped down in 1989, more perspectives on Chilean TV came out from industry insiders. Juan Carlos Altamirano, a sociologist and former director of Television National de Chile (TVN), provides an industry insider's perspective on television and society. His *TV or Not TV- Una Mirada Interna de la Televisión* studies the economic and political influences that restricted and changed Chilean TV from the dictatorship through the transition to democracy. José Joaquín Brunner and Carlos Catalán, president and director, respectively, of the *Consejo Nacional de Televisión* (CNTV) from 1992-1994, wrote *Televisión: Libertad, Mercado, y Moral* to elaborate on the privatization of Chilean TV during the transition to democracy. Both works act as a defense of TV against critics of its triviality by arguing for TV as a space audiovisual space for connection, and will be used in this thesis in establishing the importance of programming models like telenovelas and variety shows in creating audience engagement that eventually fed into the No campaign.

This thesis will also use a wide variety of primary sources from newspapers to pamphlets to television advertisements and programming. Episodes of telenovelas like *La madrastra* and Canal 13's archives of *Sábado Gigante* were crucial in understanding and analyzing the content that defined a new era of consumerism and neoliberalism under the dictatorship. Articles from the underground left-wing magazine *Pluma y Pincel* offer a counter narrative to the pro-Pinochet newspaper *La Nación*, which was taken over by the armed forces six days after the coup. Both news sources in conjunction revealed a lot about Chilean's reactions to what they saw on TV and the No campaign. These primary resources

give voice to in-the-moment perception of Chileans living through the economic, cultural, and social changes of the dictatorship.

In terms of theoretical works, most of the literature stems from non-Chilean scholars. This is in part due to the relative newness of the Chilean television industry—television wasn't introduced in Chile until 1959—and the lack of academic freedom during the dictatorship. Nonetheless many of these theoretical and critical approaches to television apply to the Chilean case. For the chapter of telenovelas, I use Miguel Sabido's education entertainment theory to add to the argument of the genre as a source of socialization, identification, and escapism. For the chapter on variety shows, John Fiske's *Television Culture* and *Reading Television* informs my consideration of television as an agent of enculturation and capitalism while tying in the hyper-consumerist focus of shows like *Sábado Gigante*. These critical texts add to the interpretation of the Chilean government's actions and the response of the viewing public.

Outside of communication and sociological studies of TV, there is a lack of historical secondary sources on TV in Chile. This is due to a variety of reasons from censorship to television's late introduction in Chile. María de la Luz Hurtados's *Historia de la TV en Chile* (1958-1973) is the only comprehensive Chilean history of television in existence. Hurtados's *Historia* mainly deals with TV's origin story in Chile from politicians' initial pushback due to economic factors to the politics that formed TV channels in the universities. After Hurtado's book there is a gap in the bibliography until the sociological works of Fuenzalida, Altamirano, Brunner, and Catalán in the 90s. As a result, this thesis hopes to fill in the holes of Chile's television history by giving the contradictory and complex industry that boomed during the dictatorship its historical due.

Chapter 1: Control versus Freedom: A Historical and Economic Context



Footage of the coup taken through the blinds of an office window across from La Moneda of the bombing, Canal 13, 1973

At 7:00am on September 11th, 1973 the Chilean Army cut radio and television transmissions across the country. Canal 13 was the only TV channel still on air. By 2:30pm the Air Force started bombing the presidential palace, La Moneda. The footage that would later broadcast around the country and the world showed Hunter Hawker fighter planes zooming across the sky as bombs fell on La Moneda, shooting smoke and flames into the air. On the Canal 13 daily news report, the noise of the bombs seemed incongruent with the news anchor's factual narration informing Chilean citizens of the suicide of President Allende and the success of the military coup that would eventually place General Augusto Pinochet in power for 17 years. Cut scenes showing empty streets shaking from the bombs'

aftershock interrupt footage of La Moneda crumbling. A camera crew from the news team at Canal 13 shot these surprisingly close scenes from the roof of and inside an office building across the plaza. For the next three days, Canal 13 was the only functioning TV channel in Chile as the military Junta quickly shut down the other two national channels, TVN and Canal 9 in an attempt to reorganize the flow of information in their favor. The Junta gave Canal 13 temporary usage of TVN's more extensive national network. When the other channels came back on air, the television industry in Chile had not completely changed but began a complicated process of managed censorship and depoliticization with economic liberalization.

The distinctive situation of the television industry during Pinochet's dictatorship as an economically liberal industry under a politically intrusive government, stems all the way back to the founding of the Chilean television industry in the 1950s. In 1951 Philadelphia-based radio manufacturer, Philco, petitioned Chile's National Council on Foreign Commerce, to establish the country's first television channel. The Council rejected Philco's petition, citing the company's lack of funding and technical expertise in TV.⁸ In 1956, George Slater, an American businessman proposed building a radio and television factory with the hopes of popularizing Chilean TV consumption. The Committee on Foreign Investment denied Slater's proposal because it did not "meet the requirements to stimulate industrial development or improve the exploitation of mineral or agricultural resources."⁹ Just two years later in 1958, Chilean entrepreneur Luis Vicentini and Uruguayan Ernesto Schiapacasse created the company Condor Chile and finally obtained approval from the

⁸ María de la Luz Hurtado, *Historia de la Televisión Chilena Entre 1959 y 1973*, (Santiago: Ediciones Documentas, 1989) 23.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Chilean government to start the country's first foray into television. Unfortunately, the company only survived 50 days before failing after they were unable to pay the tariffs on their equipment imported from the U.S.¹⁰

These three failed attempts to establish TV's presence in Chile demonstrate a lack of support from the government due to economic concerns. Beginning in the economically unstable years of the 1930s and 1940s, largely influenced by global pressures from the Great Depression to World War II, Chile adopted economic policies based on Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). Economists Raúl Prebisch, Hans Singer and Celso Furtado formed the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) in 1948, which promoted ISI believing that state-induced industrialization through government planning would lead to economic development. Chile, as a member and headquarters of CEPAL, was a pioneer in the adoption of ISI practices. A core tenant of ISI involved replacing foreign imports with domestic production and the creation of high import tariffs as an incentive—such tariffs would eventually prevent Condor Chile from forming Chile's first private TV channel. This especially compounded after the Korean War in 1953 by a sharp drop in the price of copper on the world market—Chile's main export—which limited foreign reserves and imports. This all made it even harder for anyone hoping to start a commercial television channel to obtain technology and funds.

In addition to an economic policy and situation detrimental to the growth of the television industry, Chile struggled with high inflation rates throughout the 1950s hovering

¹⁰ Elizabeth (Fox de Cardona) Fox, *Latin American Broadcasting: From Tango to Telenovela* (Luton, Bedfordshire, U.K.: University of Luton Press, c1997).

around 30%.¹¹ As a response in 1953, President Ibañez announced that cuts “[would] be introduced in fiscal expenditure,” effectively limiting the amount of money available for new technologies like television.¹² When Jorge Alessandri came into power after Ibañez in 1958, he continued this trend with a stabilization plan aimed at containing inflation by further reducing public spending. These policies effectively meant that the government didn’t have the funding or capacity to develop or approve plans for public or private television channels. Outside of the government, funding from domestic media or communications companies was also highly unlikely. Contrary to other Latin American countries like Mexico or Brazil, Chile didn’t have a strong national radio industry that could potentially enter into the television business. Large agricultural and mining companies owned the main Chilean radio stations.¹³ Chile didn’t have a multimedia conglomerate or a government with the capital to start investing in the television industry.

Besides the restrictions to fiscal spending, Chile lacked any legislation on telecommunications. The enactment of the *Ley de Comunicaciones* in 1958, which placed regulatory matters under the Ministry of the Economy was the first piece of legislation. The new law would grant commercial TV licenses to Chileans with the approval of the President; however, during Alessandri’s six years in office (1958-1964) he failed to approve a single license. Alessandri clarified, “*somos un país pobre. La television es un derroche de ricos, una válvula de escape de las divisas/ we are a poor country. Television is an extravagance for the wealthy, an escape valve of foreign exchange reserves.*”¹⁴

¹¹ Rodrigo Caputo and Diego Saravia, *The Fiscal and Monetary History of Chile 1960-2010*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, April 2014), 3.

¹² “Economic Control in Chile Weighed” *The New York Times*, July 6, 1965.

¹³ Elizabeth Fox, *From Tango to Telenovela*. 118.

¹⁴ Jorge Alessandri, “Entrevista con el Presidente,” *Ercilla*, May 1961.

Alessandri and many of Chile's politicians thought of television as form of superfluous consumption that would only distract from their efforts to advance the Chilean economy. The fact that many of the first attempts to establish television came from foreigners only heightened the Chilean government's resolve to prevent the flow of foreign investment away from mining to television. The lack of technical knowledge and production made it necessary to import technology but high import tariffs on non-mining technology created a barrier to entry for anyone hoping to start a television station or even popularize TVs in the Chilean home. These obstacles made Chile one of the last South American countries to introduce television.

This confluence of governmental, cultural, and economic factors resulted in a unique origin story for television in Chile. Instead of creating a public TV channel along the model of the BBC in the United Kingdom or PBS in the U.S., public television became the purview of the universities. Communist Party Senator, Jaime Barros, argued in a hearing, "*las universidades, como alma mater, son las únicas instituciones destinadas a impartir cultura. La television en manos de ellas no constituye peligro alguno/* the universities, as *alma mater*, are unique institutions destined to impart culture. Television in their hands will not be in any danger."¹⁵ Then Socialist Party senator and future President, Salvador Allende, echoed Barros and added a warning, "*autorizar la television privada representaría un actitud antidemocrática/* to authorize private television would represent an antidemocratic attitude."¹⁶ Allende and many others on the left were concerned that the radio channel monopolies by mining companies would extend to television, causing an overall monopoly on the dissemination of information.

¹⁵ María de la Luz Hurtado, *Historia de la Televisión Chilena Entre 1959 y 1973*, 37.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

It wasn't just the Communist and Socialist party that supported the formation of TV as a public good. The majority coalition under Alessandri's Christian Democrat party also wanted to keep TV under some facet of governmental control. They were concerned that foreign or liberal influences could taint programming. Some even cited moral arguments against importing American TV shows that supposedly went against good Catholic values. Both sides did agree that TV should fundamentally be educational, even agreeing in a joint statement to the newspaper, *El Mercurio*, "*la tarea educativa trasciende las aulas y se complementa y enriquece por los medios audiovisuales que la técnica contemporánea ha puesto en manos de hombre/* the educational work transcends the classroom and is complemented and enriched by audiovisual mediums that current technology has put in the hands of mankind."¹⁷ Therefore both the left and the right supported the creation of public television in Chile's three most prestigious universities— Universidad de Chile (UCHile), Pontificia Universidad Católica de Santiago (UCatolica), and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (UCV)—and had reasons to hinder the establishment of private, commercial broadcasters.

The formation of television in the universities made sense beyond just their status as cultural and educational institutions. In terms of technology, all the engineering departments had been experimenting with sending videos and images across frequencies since the late 1920s. Additionally, unlike Condor Chile's troubles with importing equipment, the universities, as non-profit educational institutions didn't have to pay import tariffs on acquired technology. There was also an influx of scholarship money from the Chilean government to study in the U.S. in return for government work after graduation. By

¹⁷ *El Mercurio*, May 31st, 1963.

the late 1950s many engineers returning from the U.S. wanted to introduce television to Chilean audiences. Therefore, just six years after the National Council on Foreign Commerce rejected Philco's petition, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso broadcast the country's first original transmission on October 5th, 1957, inaugurating Chile's first television channel, UCV, with a program showcasing the University's new laboratories and science building.

Almost from the very beginning, the university channels catered their programming to their own interpretations of the government's educational mission. On August 21st, 1959 the 181st birthday of Chilean Founding Father and First Head of State, Bernardo O'Higgins, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago inaugurated Canal 2—which would later become Chile's most watched channel, Canal 13. The very first program featured a video homage to the leader followed by an academic discussion led by Jamie Eyzaguirre on O'Higgins's influence. Eyzaguirre was the preeminent historian on Chile and director of UCatólica's historical pedagogy classes in the School of Education. He was also the inaugural consultant for UCatólica's Television Department in 1960. Eyzaguirre was a firm believer in the idea that Chile needed to maintain a national identity built on a "Hispanic and Catholic tradition," and saw television as a method to preserve and disseminate those traditions.¹⁸ Therefore, it was no coincidence that Canal 2 opened on the birthday of Chile's fabled liberator with a history lesson.

Unlike Eyzaguirre, the directors behind Canal 9 did not intentionally promote an image of Chilean identity rooted in national pride or Catholic tradition. Television at UChile was the project of the university's Rector Juan Gómez Millas and his General Secretary

¹⁸ Luis Celis, Ricardo Krebs and Luis Scherz, "Historia de los 90 años de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile," *Revista Universitaria*, (1978): 31.

Alvaro Bunster. The two administrators approached Raúl Aicardi, a professor of journalism, to become the inaugural director of the Audiovisual Department. The channel principles were to “*difundir cultura, informar sobre la Universidad, educar e investigar/* to spread culture, inform about the University, educate, and investigate.”¹⁹ Most of all, the channel would turn TV into a medium “to search and assert the essence of ‘being National.’”²⁰ Unlike Eyzaguirre, the directors of Canal 9 did not intentionally promote an image of Chilean identity rooted in national pride or Catholic tradition. Aicardi noted in an interview that Canal 9 wanted to broadcast towards the middle class, not the elite—although only 5,000 TV sets existed in Chile in 1960 making the assertion more aspirational than practical.²¹ This difference in mission and audience was apparent in the channel’s programming. Instead of academic talks with Eyzaguirre celebrating a Founding Father, Canal 9 broadcast programs such as *Monologo*, a documentary show that followed actors as they prepared for their theater roles, or *No pasar* a dramatized storytelling of supernatural events. The programming on Canal 9 was aimed towards cultural entertainment instead of a particular curriculum to uphold nationalism or Catholicism.

In 1969, the Frei government set up Televisión Nacional (TVN) a national public television channel separate from any university that was directly under the purview of the federal government. The creation of TVN did not stem from social and cultural concerns of preserving national identity, but from a practical and economic standpoint. Chilean politicians on both sides were concerned that their telecommunications industry was lagging behind other Latin American countries. A massive 9.4 magnitude earthquake—the

¹⁹ María de la Luz Hurtado, *Historia de la Televisión Chilena Entre 1959 y 1973*, 69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

most powerful ever recorded—had destroyed much of the southern Chile’s telecommunications infrastructure. Nine years later, most of Chile outside of the Central Valley—where Santiago and Valparaíso are located—still had no access to television channels. On September 18th, 1969, using the recently formed state telecommunications company, *Empresa Nacional de Telecomunicaciones* (Entel) that installed microwave networks throughout Chile, the government inaugurated the country’s first national TV network that extended from Puerto Montt in the south to Arica in the north.

Beyond the practical need to create a national telecommunications network, Frei was in the midst of promoting an economic reform program titled, “Revolution in Liberty.” Frei saw the state as a tool to integrate and unite Chilean society. He accepted nearly \$1 billion U.S. dollars in foreign aid from John F. Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress to modernize the disenfranchised rural areas of Chile.²² Frei expropriated land from hacienda owners dating back to the colonial era to distribute among sharecroppers. He also sent teachers to the countryside to implement a national literacy program. Additionally, the state sponsored creation of farmers unions to give farmers collective bargaining powers against the landholding elite. Frei hoped that a national TV channel could help achieve his dream of national integration between the metropolis of Santiago and the less populated and more isolated north and south. He saw a national TV channel as an opportunity to be “*aceptada por toda la sociedad, y con la cual se pudieran sentir interpretados la gran mayoría de los chilenos*/ accepted by all of society, and through this feel represented by the majority of

²² Sebastian Hurtado-Torres, “The Gathering Storm: The United States, Eduardo Frei’s Revolution in Liberty and the Polarization of Chilean Politics, 1964-1970” (Ph.D., Ohio University, 2016)

Chileans.”²³ For Frei, the university channels catered too much to the elite and he hoped to expand their audience and representation.

Frei was well aware that a national TV channel would be seen as a propaganda organ for his Christian Democrat party, especially since the channel opened just one year before the elections in 1970. In an effort to separate TVN from politics he gave control over to the *Corporación de Fomento de la Producción de Chile* (CORFO), an agency under the *Ministerio de Hacienda*—the equivalent of the treasury in the U.S.—that was in charge of programs promoting economic growth in Chile. Additionally TVN established guidelines for its programming. TVN was to uphold, “the objectivity of messages, to distinguish between fact and opinion, between the interviewer’s opinion and the channel’s, to cite the news agencies for international news.”²⁴ To that end, the true goal of TVN was not to publicize Frei’s Christian Democrat administration ahead of the elections, but to foster national integration.

The programming on TVN spoke to this desire. Most of TVN’s shows were weekly documentaries focusing on local organizations or Latin American culture. *Nosotros americanos* or *We Americans* covered music, culture, and current issues in other Latin American countries. *Este es mi pueblo* or *This is My Village* featured a traveling group of entertainers who would compete against villagers in scavenger hunts. *Decisión ’70* was the most popular show as it followed the presidential election campaign of 1970. While Canal 2 sought to promote Chile’s Catholic tradition and Canal 9 entertained the educated middle class, TVN strove to represent the nation at large.

²³ María de la Luz Hurtado, *Historia de la Televisión Chilena Entre 1959 y 1973*, 274.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 274.

Despite all of Frei's economic and social efforts from land redistribution to cultural documentaries, his goal of creating social harmony backfired. Rural workers now had the ability to mobilize through unions and many more registered to vote, possibly convinced that politicians were finally hearing their voices.²⁵ Polarization between classes increased as traditional elites feared the rise of the growing working class. Instead of supporting the center-right Christian Democrats, many rural workers sided with the Socialist and Communists of the left Unidad Popular coalition. In 1970, the election of Socialist Party leader, Salvador Allende, became the culmination of "Revolution in Liberty" policies that gave power and agency to the working class.

Upon Allende's ascension in 1971, he rapidly began instituting reforms. The government completely nationalized the copper industry—Chile's main source of income—accelerated land expropriation, and increase social services. By the 1970s nearly 70% of the working population had some form of state-sponsored social security and the state health system provided for 90% of the population.²⁶ Additionally, by 1973 approximately 85% of the financial sector belonged to the state.²⁷ Initially these programs were largely seen as a huge success. The Chilean economy grew by 8.9% in 1971, inflation fell to 28.2%, and unemployment reached a historical low of 3.8%.²⁸ This success prompted a visit from Fidel Castro and had many in the international press astounded by the peaceful and democratic socialist transition. *The New York Times* even conceded that Allende was "a

²⁵ Daniel Hellinger, *Comparative Politics of Latin America: Democracy at Last?* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

²⁶ Taylor Marcus, *From Pinochet to the Third Way: Neoliberalisms and Social Transformation in Chile*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006) 17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

shrewd and seasoned politician,” who carefully and gradually integrated socialist reforms.²⁹

However Chile was still becoming more and more politically polarized—Allende even conceded that half the country “would like to see [him] fried in oil”—and this was visible on the national television channels.³⁰ After various student takeovers of UChile and UCatólica in 1967 and 1968 with the support of labor unions forced administrative and bureaucratic change, the university channels began to take on a more overt left-wing political stance. When Allende came into power, the Christian Democrats controlled the legislative branch and feared the further spread of left wing dominance. In October of 1970 right before Allende took office, the Christian Democrats passed a new telecommunications law (Ley 17377). This law would be the sole telecommunications law in Chile until 1989, taking effect during all of Allende’s presidency and through the dictatorship.

Christian Democrats saw the 1970 telecommunications law as a method to curb the president’s power over the TV. The law did clear up the legality of some practices by officially allowing commercial advertising—although all channels had long practiced this without penalty. It also reaffirmed that TV would stay with the universities and gave all channels—not just TVN—funding from the national budget. However, the law also introduced checks to the growth of television; it prohibited “the university channels from expanding into provinces and setting up new channels and networks” and increased the power of university rectors to temper the power of labor unions and students.³¹ The law also laid out provisions for equal representation of political viewpoints on TVN. If the

²⁹ Juan de Onis, “The First 100 Days: The Socialism is Low Key,” *The New York Times* Feb. 15th, 1971.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Elizabeth Fox, *From Tango to Telenovela*. 124.

ruling party wanted to air a program promoting their agendas they were required to share with “*los Partidos de oposición en proporción a la representación parlamentaria que ellos tengan/* the opposition parties in proportion to the parliamentary representation that they had,” which meant that at the time the Christian Democrats with larger representation would get more airtime than Allende’s socialist party.³² These stipulations of the 1970 telecommunications law written by a powerful opposition party set the ground for a depoliticized television industry and reinforced the precedent of TV regulation as a political tool. With this new law, Allende never fully developed a coherent television policy or programming model on TVN, and the shift of TV media towards the left never reached fruition.

Allende arguably had bigger issues to deal with than the TV industry. By the end of 1970, many of his reforms were proving to be unsustainable. The loss of foreign investment due to U.S. placed sanctions on Allende’s government because of Allende’s socialism and ties to Cuba, and the declining price of copper increased Chile’s budget deficit at a time when public spending was increasing. Soon Allende had to print more money causing inflation. Just a month before the coup in 1973, inflation reach 1000%.³³ Additionally, many of Allende’s policies were quite controversial. Many politicians feared a repeat of the Cuban revolution and criticized Allende’s overuse of executive orders as unconstitutional. Frei told *The Times* that Allende was “trespassing on the law...[trying] to impose this totalitarian *étatiste* model”³⁴ Even the Chilean Supreme Court stated that the country faced “a crisis of

³² Ley 17.377, Artículo 36.

³³ Daniel Hellinger, *Comparative Politics of Latin America: Democracy at Last?* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

³⁴ Taylor Marcus, *From Pinochet to the Third Way: Neoliberalisms and Social Transformation in Chile*, 5.

the rule of law.”³⁵ On August 22nd, 1973, the lower chamber of the Chilean Congress proposed a resolution declaring that the Allende’s Unidad Popular had broken laws, violated the constitution, and advocated for impeachment. This coupled with CIA support for military intervention, created an environment ripe for a coup. On September 11th, 1973, the Armed Forces of Chile attacked La Moneda, the office of the President. Left with no other option, Allende committed suicide in his office using a gun gifted to him by Fidel Castro.

Almost immediately after the coup, the Junta began a three-day blackout of communications—only Canal 13 was permitted to broadcast due to its staunch anti-Allende stance since 1970.³⁶ During this time nearly 40 journalists with left-wing ties were murdered—the director of TVN, Augusto Olivares, died defending La Moneda with Allende—and many more forcibly exiled.³⁷ The regime immediately placed members of the military as channel directors. Rear Admiral Hugo Castro of the navy became the Minister of Education on September 28th, 1973. The Junta gave him “amplios poderes/ broad powers” to restructure the universities and through them, the TV channels.³⁸ The regime set about taking down radio stations, magazines, and newspapers that were deemed too left wing. This especially affected Canal 9, which *El Mercurio*, a right-wing newspaper, described its workforce as “mayoritariamente de tendencia marxista/ the majority of a Marxist

³⁵ Taylor Marcus, *From Pinochet to the Third Way: Neoliberalisms and Social Transformation in Chile*, 6.

³⁶ Sergio Godoy Etcheverry, *Publicamente Rentable*, (Chile: Ediciones Universidad Catolica de Chile, 2000) 74.

³⁷ Richard Gott, “Allende’s Last Hours - Fighting to the End,” *The Guardian*, September 14, 1973, sec. World news, and Elizabeth Fox, *From Tango to Telenovela*. 126.

³⁸ “Reorganización total de las Universidades.” *El Mercurio*, Oct. 3rd, 1973, 1.

tendency.”³⁹ The Junta also outlawed all other political parties and seized the property of individuals with membership or ties to former parties. Eventually the regime passed a national security law that heavily censored any media that still remained in private hands. While the Junta did allow the four national channels to return to air at the end of three days, it became clear that the television industry would have to adjust to life under a dictatorship that had much more power than the push and pull of political parties under the presidential republic.

The TV industry—like the rest of the country—was profoundly impacted by the Junta’s neoliberal economic strategy. During the first few years the military Junta struggled to fix the unstable Chilean economy. Food shortages and inflation, although lower than before the coup, remained an issue well into 1974. In 1975 the American economist and professor at the University of Chicago, Milton Friedman made a well-publicized visit to Chile. UCatólica had been sending graduate students to Chicago since 1956; by the time of the coup in 1973 these graduates formed the now infamous “Chicago Boys.”⁴⁰ They were vocal opponents of Allende’s policies, and published in August 1973 an economic study and proposal titled, *El Ladrillo* or *The Brick*. *El Ladrillo* championed the free market ideas of neoliberalism, and cited Friedman as an inspiration. There were reports that Pinochet had a copy of *El Ladrillo* on his desk in the months after the coup as the Junta planned out their economic policies. When Friedman arrived in Chile he visited both UCatólica and UChile to give talks on monetary policy and had a 45-minute meeting with Pinochet where he made recommendations on combating inflation and copper dependency. Although Friedman

³⁹ “Rebeldía marxista en Canal 9,” *El Mercurio*, Jan. 3rd, 1973, 3.

⁴⁰ Sergio de Castro, “El Ladrillo: Bases de la Política Económica del Gobierno Militar Chileno,” *Centro de Estudios Públicos*, 7.

never directly enacted any economic policies in Chile, his visit was indicative of a dramatic shift towards the neoliberalism of the Chicago Boys. In 1976, the Junta appointed Sergio de Castro, a prominent member of the Chicago Boys and one of the authors of *El Ladrillo*, as Finance Minister. Immediately, de Castro pulled Chile out of trade agreements with neighboring countries, reduced tariffs to a blanket 10%, and began privatizations.⁴¹

All of these neoliberal reforms did not result in immediate success. De Castro and the Chicago Boys planned for a recession or “shock therapy” in hopes of reorganizing Chile’s economy completely. The transformation from an ISI and socialist economy to free market neoliberalism had costs. The Chicago Boys believed that it was “a necessary move in order to obliterate enterprises that were inefficient and relied upon state institutions such as tariffs and state credit in order to survive.”⁴² The slashing of tariffs hurt Chilean manufacturers, who suddenly had to compete with cheaper foreign imports—although in the long term this would reduce consumers’ costs. A mass layoff of those in the public sector coupled with privatization of many state companies led to unemployment levels above 15%, while wages declined to only 64.8% of their levels in 1970.⁴³ Additionally, the Junta suppressed labor unions, making it illegal to organize and thereby squashing dissent over public sector layoffs. However by 1982, GDP growth rates reached over 6% in 1986.⁴⁴ Prices of consumer goods decreased compared to wages, allowing larger percentage of the population to own more household goods. Only 5.6% of households had a refrigerator in

⁴¹ Leonidas Montes, “Friedman’s Two Visits to Chile in Context,” *University of Richmond Graduate Journal* (2010): 21.

⁴² Taylor Marcus, *From Pinochet to the Third Way: Neoliberalisms and Social Transformation in Chile*, 56.

⁴³ Leonidas Montes, “Friedman’s Two Visits to Chile in Context,” 22.

⁴⁴ “Chile Home.” Accessed Jan. 10th, 2017. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/chile>.

1970, but by 1982, 49% did.⁴⁵ Additionally more women entered the labor force, increasing total household incomes—although individual wages still hadn't reached the same purchasing power levels of 1970 due to lingering inflation.⁴⁶ This success prompted Friedman to famously coin the term “Miracle of Chile” in his *Newsweek* column.

While the Junta privatized countless industries from water and sanitation to pensions, they maintained the old 1970 telecommunications laws that prevented private ownership of TV stations. This likely stemmed from a desire to prevent any opposition from controlling media output—even if it went against free market policies. The Junta did announce the need for the TV industry to become economically independent of the government and cut all funding given to TVN and the university channels. This placed a big burden on the channels. Government funding made up 40% of TVN's budget and 20% of the universities.⁴⁷ The Junta's economic policies forced the national TV channels into a complicated transition from an educational or public institution to that of a business in need of making ends meet. The next two chapters will delve into the programming responses that resulted from this shift in the form of telenovelas and variety shows.

The tensions between freedom of expression, economic policy, and state control marked the history of the Chilean TV. TV did not enter Chile until 1959 due to a combination of ISI economics and derision from prominent politicians. Frei created TVN in hopes of uniting Chile's disparate factions. The government interfered and used TV to forward their political goals long before the Junta's hypocritical reluctance to privatize TV. However, the Junta's choice to simply cut funding while maintaining ownership coupled

⁴⁵ Chile ING, “La Familia Chilena en el Tiempo” *Estadísticas del Bicentenario*, Dec. 2010.

⁴⁶ “Chile Home.” Accessed Jan 10th, 2017. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/chile>.

⁴⁷ Octavio Getino, *La tercera Mirada*, (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1996) 128. and Elizabeth Fox, *From Tango to Telenovela*. 126.

with an influx of cheap foreign imports to market and increasing purchasing power, created a new programming model that ultimately fulfilled the goal of economic independence while promoting capitalism and consumerism. However, this new programming model that promoted telenovelas and variety shows in order to focus on gaining viewership over top-down educational goals, set in motion the mass media forces that would eventually backfire on Pinochet.

Chapter 2: Telenovelas and the Discursive Space



Actress Yael Unger as Marcia Jones in the finale of *La madrastra*, Canal 13, 1981.

On September 17th, 1981 shops throughout Chile flew the country's red, white, and blue flags in preparation for the next day's Independence Day celebrations, however, this year signs stating, "*aquí se ve La madrastra/ Here we watch La madrastra*" appeared alongside the patriotic festivities.⁴⁸ *La madrastra*, or *The Stepmother* was a telenovela that followed Marcia Jones, an ex-convict, as she tried to clear her name and enact revenge on those who framed her for the murder of her friend, Patricia Soler. Chileans throughout the country—the ratings reached 80%—sat glued to Canal 13 from 7:15pm to 8:15pm as they

⁴⁸ "La madrastra, A 30 años del fenómeno." *Teleserieschilenas.cl* April 13, 2011.

finally got an answer to the question “who killed Patricia Soler?”⁴⁹ The hype was so intense that the director, Óscar Rodríguez had to shoot five alternate endings just a day before the finale airdate to prevent spoilers from leaking.⁵⁰ Rodríguez even noted that “*Se supo de reuniones de ministros y ejecutivos que fueron suspendidas/* meetings between ministers and executives were postponed” in order to watch the final episodes of the show.⁵¹ For the unlucky viewer who missed the finale, *La Nación* printed spoilers on the front page of their Independence Day paper alongside a message from Pinochet and a list of parades, blaring, “*Estrella era la asesina*”/ Estrella was the murderer.”⁵² *La madrastra*, was the first domestic telenovela to consistently beat foreign—mainly Mexican, Argentine, Brazilian, and American TV shows—imported shows on ratings. *La madrastra* also introduced Chile as an exporter of TV content. Televisa in Mexico and FOX in the U.S. bought and successfully adapted the show in 1985 and 1996, respectively. The popularity of *La madrastra* represented the potential reach and power of telenovelas in Chile.

Telenovelas have a reputation as entertainment for the masses or in more disparaging terms: *la entretención tonta* or stupid entertainment.⁵³ Critics note that the acting is overdramatic, the music cuts sudden, the production values low, and the dialogue clichéd. Telenovelas were often condescendingly designed to reach the lowest common denominator. In fact, Valentín Pimstein, one of first telenovela producers in Mexico, often

⁴⁹ Jimmy Gavilán, “A 35 años de su debut, cómo la teleserie La Madrastra cambio las relas del género en Chile” *La Tercera*. 2016

⁵⁰ “‘La madrastra’ termina de grabarse,” *La Nación* (Santiago, Chile), August 14th, 1981.

⁵¹ Jimmy Gavilán, “A 35 años de su debut, cómo la teleserie La Madrastra cambio las relas del género en Chile” *La Tercera*.

⁵² “Estrella era la asesina,” *La Nación*. (Santiago, Chile) Sept. 18th, 1981.

⁵³ Sergio Godoy Etcheverry, *Publicamente Rentable: evaluación de la TV Publica chilena orientada al Mercado*, 212.

defended his choices by declaring, “If we don’t do it this way, my maid won’t understand.”⁵⁴ Regardless of the form’s reputation, telenovelas may be one of the most successful genres of television in the world. Today, some estimates state that the global telenovela audience reaches around 2 billion people.⁵⁵ In the case of *La madrastra*, TV show about a woman’s revenge managed to captivate a nation on the supposedly most patriotic day of the year. In fact, the original finale was supposed to air of September 11th, 1981, the 8th anniversary of the coup, however, the Junta didn’t want the finale to overshadow their commemoration programming and forced Canal 13 to move the broadcast.⁵⁶ The hype and fanfare surrounding *La madrastra* recalls the potential of the genre as a more than just a pop culture phenomenon. The telenovela’s development in Chile came out of the Junta’s economic reforms as production model based on viewer feedback. This coupled with the genre’s narrative tools increased TV’s ability to converse with viewers as its programming distracted from and promoted social and cultural norms.

Telenovelas are serial dramas with episodes of 30-45 minutes that run five to six times a week during the prime time evening slot for eight to nine months. Telenovelas likely grew out of radio plays based on popular novels from the 30s. From the very beginning the genre was a marketing tool. In the late 40s, American soap companies sponsored daytime radio plays—later dubbed soap operas—aimed at promoting products to women through dramatic stories. American radio broadcasters exported these soap

⁵⁴ Pablo Helguera, “The Global Pandemic of the Telenovela,” *Vice*, Jun. 1st, 2008.

https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/global-pandemic-telenovela-151-v15n6

⁵⁵ Alex Bellos, “Telenovelas, the Story so Far,” *The Telegraph*, Jan. 7th, 2007.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3662430/Telenovelas-the-story-so-far.html>

⁵⁶ “La madrastra, A 30 años del fenómeno.” *Teleserieschilenas.cl* April 13, 2011

operas to the Cuban market, popularizing the genre there and all over Latin America.⁵⁷ Colgate-Palmolive sponsored the first radio soap operas in Cuba, and after the Cuban Revolution in 1959 many of these producers fled to other Latin American countries.⁵⁸ When televisions became more prominent, the format shifted over. Mexico is often credited as the creator of the first telenovelas in 1958—or at least the country that popularized the format.⁵⁹ Chile, a late comer to television in general, did not produce domestic telenovelas until 1965, and didn't have an internationally successful one until *La madrastra* in 1981.

The television market in Latin American has always been heavily saturated with American creative content. As early as 1965, the television industry in the U.S. made over \$125 million dollars annually in overseas sales—adjusted for inflation that would be around \$947 million in 2017.⁶⁰ By 1971, approximately 80% of Latin America's programming was produced in the U.S.⁶¹ Popular shows included, *The Flintstones*, *I Love Lucy*, and *Bonanza*. Around the early-70s, telenovelas from Mexico and Brazil began to compete with U.S. TV shows in Chile. The Mexican genre aimed at a distinctly adult female audience with programs that were “filmed indoors and were focused on passions of the heart.”⁶² These telenovelas often focused a young woman's romantic trials and tribulations. Brazilian telenovelas had influences from magical realism and *costumbrismo*, a literary movement that focused on interpretations of local everyday life for the purpose of satirical

⁵⁷ Sergio Godoy Etcheverry, *Publicamente Rentable: evaluación de la TV Pública chilena orientada al Mercado*, 213.

⁵⁸ Joseph Straubhaar and Sophia Koutsoyannis, “Telenovela,” *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*. (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2008) 40.

⁵⁹ Alex Bellos, “Telenovelas, the Story so Far,” *The Telegraph* Jan. 7th, 2007.

⁶⁰ Alan Wells, *Picture-tube Imperialism*, (1972: Orbis Books, New York) 120

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 121

⁶² Juan Carlos Altamirano. *¿TV or Not TV—Una Mirada Interna de la Televisión*. (Santiago, Chile: Planeta, 2006) 470.

critique. Brazilian television entered Chile at a later date, but by the 80s a sizeable chunk of telenovelas produced in the country were Spanish dubs from TV Globo, a Brazilian channel.⁶³ The proliferation of American, Mexican, and Brazilian shows meant that most Chileans seldom saw creative content produced for and by their own people.

The high level of foreign content on Chilean channels stemmed from a lack of funding and production costs. Before the coup in 1973, the channels received a significant portion—20% for the university channels and 40% for TVN—of their funding from the government.⁶⁴ When Pinochet came into power and the Chicago Boys began their neoliberalization project these subsidies were cut. The impact on the programming was almost immediate. In 1971, Chilean produced programs were 45% of all television content, but by 1976 only 16% of television content was created in Chile.⁶⁵ The lack of government funding also affected the type of programming. In 1972, 67.9% of programming featured entertainment programs—variety shows, telenovelas—13.1% were cultural—shows highlighting local customs or artists, tapings of the symphony—while 19% were informational—news programs, documentaries. The numbers shift by 1982, 15.9% were informational, 79.7% entertainment, 4.4% cultural.⁶⁶ This data implies that TV channels began to stray from the pre-dictatorship focus on educational and cultural programming to entertainment that could drive up ratings and advertisement revenue. Purchasing rights to broadcast a show is cheaper and less risky than producing a new show from scratch. If the

⁶³ Juan Carlos Altamirano. *¿TV or Not TV—Una Mirada Interna de la Televisión*. 470.

⁶⁴ Octavio Getino, *La tercera Mirada*, (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1996) 128. and Elizabeth Fox, *From Tango to Telenovela*. 126.

⁶⁵ Sergio Godoy Etcheverry, *Publicamente Rentable: evaluación de la TV Pública chilena orientada al Mercado*, 93.

⁶⁶ Valerio Fuenzalida, *Transformaciones en La Estructura de la T.V. Chilena*, (Santiago, Chile: CENECA, 1983).

show is popular enough in one country there is already a proven audience for the content. Therefore, channels like Canal 13 and TVN began to cut down on their own content and purchased rights for more American, Mexican and Brazilian shows. A look at a *Telerama* TV schedule from August 1983 shows many foreign shows from *Charlie's Angels* to *Popeye* to *Sesame Street*.⁶⁷ The entertainment section *La Nación*, also heavily featured content on foreign TV and movie stars from Frank Sinatra to Dick Van Dyke.⁶⁸

La madrastra represented a turning point in Chilean telenovela production. Firstly, it marked technical progress, as it was one of the first telenovelas to be broadcast in full color. Secondly, *La madrastra's* 80% ratings success led to a boom in domestic telenovela production. Oscar Rodríguez, the director, noted a shift in the availability to create telenovelas:

*"Sin La madrastra...la industria de la telenovela chilena no sé si no existiría, pero se hubiese retrasado. El ser una producción de ficción con ese éxito de audiencia, significaba para los canales un lugar para invertir, y fue cuando le dieron espalda a este género/ without La madrastra...the Chilean telenovela industry, I don't know if it wouldn't exist, but it would've been delayed. To be a fictional production with this success, meant for the channels a space to invest, at a time when they were turning their backs on the genre."*⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Telerama*, August 1983.

⁶⁸ "Espectaculos," *La Nacion*. (Santiago, Chile) Aug. 11, 1981.

⁶⁹ Jimmy Gavilán "A 35 años de su debut, cómo la teleserie *La Madrastra* cambio las reglas del género en Chile" *La Tercera*.

After *La Madrastra*, both TVN and Canal 13—the only two channels with national reach in the 80s—began producing two to three telenovelas a year. Between 1981 and 1997 TVN and Canal 13 produced 63 original telenovelas.⁷⁰ This shift from a consumer of telenovelas to a producer of telenovelas gave Chilean directors, writers, and audiences another mode of expression and communication, and a better understanding of their audience.

Telenovelas answered the funding struggles of channels like TVN and Canal 13. With the loss of government funding, advertisements increased the importance of ratings. The more people who watched a program meant channels could charge advertisers more, citing greater publicity. A broadcast of the Chilean National Symphony wouldn't be the most accessible or enticing program. However, the daily cliffhangers and plot twists of a good telenovela had the potential to hook an audience. In the case of *La madrastra* the suspense over the murderer's identity reached such a height that the show's creator, Arturo Moya Grau, forbade the six actors playing the main suspects from leaving their homes before the finale aired due to fear of fan mobs.⁷¹ Production teams also knew how to incorporate product placement into telenovelas. For example, the popular TVN telenovela, *Bellas y Audaces* followed the relationship of between the daughter of a single mother and a financier through soda shops featuring Fanta drinks and drives through Santiago on a red Honda motorcycle.⁷² With the potential for high ratings and lucrative product placement deals, telenovelas began to populate the Chilean screen.

⁷⁰ Sergio Godoy Etcheverry, *Publicamente Rentable: evaluación de la TV Pública chilena orientada al Mercado*, 213.

⁷¹ "Espero que tengan compasión de mí" *La Nación* (Santiago, Chile) Sept, 18th, 1981.

⁷² TVN, *Bellas y Audaces*, Capítulo 1. 1988.

<http://www.tvn.cl/especiales/nuestrahistoria/decada80/bellas-y-audaces-1451877>

All telenovelas have a few basic components. Melodrama is a key ingredient. In a melodrama the characters represent two conflicting systems of behavior at war. Take the common telenovela trope of a “lower-class woman in love with the son of a millionaire.”⁷³ This is of course a highly unlikely pairing especially in a country with high-income inequality like Chile, where the top 20% percentile owned 60% of the national income.⁷⁴ However, this romantic trope reinforces the belief system that love conquers all—represented by the couple—and another system that asserts tradition and class determine compatibility. These belief systems are then tested by the character’s interactions. The “good” and “bad” characters are easily identifiable, which theorist Miguel Sabido conveniently calls “identification characters.” Viewers are supposed to relate to and watch these characters as they “evolve, reaching belief and behavioral transformations.”⁷⁵ Philosopher Hans Robert Jauss categorizes viewer identification with the hero into five categories: fusion with a relatable hero, admiration of a perfect hero, empathy for a flawed hero, cathartic identification with a suffering hero, and ironic identification with an anti-hero.⁷⁶ In some cases the identification worked too well and extended to the actors playing the characters. Actress Gloria Münchenmeyer, who played the villain in *La madrastra*, gave an interview begging audiences to “have compassion towards [her] and that the fictional

⁷³ Pablo Helguera, “The Global Pandemic of the Telenovela,” *Vice* Jun. 1st, 2008.

⁷⁴ *Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas*. Monthly Report. As presented in “Macro-Economic Study of Chile” *Economic Development Institute*, <http://pconway.web.unc.edu/files/2016/01/Chilemac.pdf>

⁷⁵ Tomás López-Pumarejo, “Telenovelas and the Israeli Television Market,” *Television and New Media* Vol. 8, Issue 3: 2007, 201.

⁷⁶ Hans Robert Jauss, “Interaction Patterns of Identification with the Hero” in: *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) 152.

TV show would not bring [her] real life problems.”⁷⁷ A study done in 1984 by Fuenzalida and Hermosilla showed that telenovela situations manifested in daily life beyond the harassment of actors. The study found that “*el público sentía que era educado cuando se identificaba emocionalmente con personajes o con situaciones que entregaban información útil para enfrentar su vida diaria/* the public felt as though they were educated when they identified emotionally with characters or situations that gave them useful information to confront their daily lives.”⁷⁸ Not only did viewers identify with these stories they were taking the experiences of the characters and applying it to their own lives.

This simple format of melodrama and identification allows for wide-reaching audiences because it is designed to have universally relatable content. Studies done in the Soviet Union after the Mexican telenovela *Los ricos también lloran* or *The Rich Also Cry* reached a peak audience of 200 million viewers in the late 80s, showed that viewers found it easier to identify with the telenovela over American shows like *Dynasty*.⁷⁹ Theorist Tomás Lopez-Pumarejo calls telenovelas, “the drama of the subconscious. They are stories that revolve around ontological questions: “Where is my son?” or “Where is my love?”⁸⁰ These are simple and universal questions that the characters and their plots easily answer. This, perhaps, explains the wide reach of telenovelas.

Another aspect that influences the popularity of a telenovela comes from the audience’s ability to influence the plot. Episodes are generally filmed just 20 days in

⁷⁷ “Espero que tengan compasión de mí” *La Nación* Sept, 18th, 1981.

⁷⁸ Sergio Godoy Etcheverry, *Publicamente Rentable: evaluación de la TV Pública chilena orientada al Mercado* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2000) 213.

⁷⁹ Pablo Helguera, “The Global Pandemic of the Telenovela,” *Vice* Jun. 1st, 2008.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

advance, and many writers used focus groups and surveys to test plot points.⁸¹ Viewers also feel a sense of control over the world as they can write letters to the station to voice their opinions, buy products the protagonists use to show support, or converse with other viewers. Not only are telenovela viewers interacting with the content creators, they are also more likely to be socially involved. A study done in 1982 by Augusto Góngora to help corporations target advertising, found that people who watched telenovelas were more likely to belong to a social organization—bible studies, neighborhood groups, hobby clubs.⁸² This means that telenovelas were a way for channels to communicate with and perform what their viewers wanted. Altamirano compares the Chilean telenovela to a “*plaza virtual*,” where the communication between viewer, creator, and performer creates an interactive space not unlike a common neighborhood square where people go to socialize.⁸³

Because so much of a telenovelas success and plot can be determined by the audience, the form can act as a microcosm of society sometimes critiquing it while in other cases perpetuating it. *Los títeres* tackled sexism while also promoting a classic backstabbing female villain, *Ángel malo* showed disparity between social classes, and *Machos* touched on masculinity and homosexuality. On top of reflecting life, the act of watching can become a part of daily life. Herмосilla found that most Chileans watched around four hours of TV daily.⁸⁴ There is also almost constant opportunity to see this world. Telenovelas occur

⁸¹ Joseph Straubhaar and Sophia Koutsoyannis, “Telenovela,” *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*. (Detroit: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2008) 40.

⁸² Augusto Gongora, *Informe*, (Chile: Corporacion de Promoción Universitaria, 1985) 17.

⁸³ Juan Carlos Altamirano, *TV or not TV*, (Santiago, Chile: Planeta, 2006) 13.

⁸⁴ Maria Elena Herмосilla, *Evaluación de CENECA en recepción activa de la televisión*, 3.

almost daily for the good part of a year. Turning on the TV and watching a prime time telenovela can become part of a daily routine.

In the case of Chilean telenovelas during the 80s, the programs were all produced under a dictatorship with directorial control. Wober and Gunter proposed that the “main effect of television is one of enculturation; that is, it cultivated stability and acceptance of the status quo.”⁸⁵ Television programs tend to portray certain images of people. In the case of Chile, most of the actors and actresses were of European descent and almost none were indigenous—even though a study done by UChile found that 70% of the population had some indigenous blood.⁸⁶ For example, Gloria Münchenmeyer, the famous actress of *La madrastra* and *Los titeres* was the child of German immigrants. Cecilia Bolocco, the first and only Chilean winner of Miss Universe and was known for her green eyes. Additionally, because many telenovelas were designed with product placement and consumption in mind there is an overrepresentation of the middle and upper class. These images coming from domestic Chilean telenovelas sent a powerful message of what was considered beautiful and what made up a good life. While telenovelas strove to create a relatable world for its viewers it also promoted a white and wealthy version.

On top of normalizing a certain depiction of Chilean life, telenovelas offered an escape from the tedium and troubles of daily life. John Fiske’s *Reading Television* argues that one of TV main goals is to offer a “fantasy-escape from daily problems and tensions.”⁸⁷ A look at the daily schedule of programs feeds into this idea. The first round of prime time telenovelas aired at 7:15pm just in time for most people to get back from work. A daily

⁸⁵ Mallor Wober and Barrie Gunter, *Television and Social Control*, (London: Gower Publishing Company, 1988) 2.

⁸⁶ “Estructura Racial,” *La Universidad de Chile*. 16 October 2007.

⁸⁷ John Fiske, *Reading Television*, (New York: Routledge, 2003) 73.

news program would stream directly afterwards followed by another prime time telenovela. This timing emphasized the importance of telenovelas as a form of escape. The first show offers relaxation after work, the second reprieve from the day's events. And perhaps that is why it was easier for people to watch and bond over *La madrastra* on Independence Day rather than fill the streets in protest or celebration. Reality isn't as clear-cut as a perfectly executed telenovela. It's harder to find agreement and there were dire consequences for disagreement. However, everyone knew they should cheer for the protagonist and speculation over who actually committed the murder would have no lasting consequences. Chileans telenovelas present a contradictory picture of media and expression. On the one hand telenovelas gave channels more sway with and from international corporate interests yet for the most part perpetuated norms with its content and served as a distraction. Nonetheless telenovelas strengthened the relationship between the individual and creative content, and bolstered a national viewing public that would become important later on in the No campaign.

Chapter 3: Variety Shows as Consumer Choice



A woman wins a car during a competition sponsored by Winter, *Sábado Gigante*, 1987

The curtain rises over a dimly lit auditorium. Everyone is singing a tune and dancing in their seats. A chubby well-dressed man glides onto the stage as a spotlight follows him to the center. The man introduces himself as Don Francisco the host of *Sábado Gigante*, and remarks that today they will honor the immigrants of Chile. The camera then pans out to an audience of diverse couples. Don Francisco enters the crowd and asks a priest, Father Mascareno, an Italian immigrant, “¿porque eligió, usted, Chile?/ Why did you choose Chile?” Mascareno responds, “*ya cansado de guerra. Aquí hay paz, encontramos un lugar donde hay no guerra, se acabo la guerra. / I was already tired of war. Here there is peace, a place where there is no war. They’re done with war.*” With this positive response Don Francisco motions to the stage band and erupts in song:

“Aquí somos un país pequeño
No se han sentido extranjeros
Se han sentidos chilenos
Porque les gusto el país
Porque les gusto la gente”

“Here we are a small country
They do not feel like foreigners
They feel like Chileans
Because they like the country
Because they like the people”⁸⁸

This is the happy, singsong world of the variety show, *Sábado Gigante*. An uninformed viewer watching this particular episode that aired on June 24th, 1978, would not be able to surmise that just five years earlier the military had staged a coup overthrowing the democratically elected Allende. They would not know that the Junta still enforced a nightly curfew that prevented people from leaving their homes after 11pm without threat of arrest. They also wouldn't learn that Chile was at the moment under martial law and in a state of war against communism. Pinochet directly stated that “The Marxist resistance has not ended, extremists still remain. I must state that Chile is at this moment in a state of internal warfare.”⁸⁹ However, five years into the dictatorship with a recovering economy and political stability, it was easy to forget that fact, especially in the escapist world of *Sábado Gigante*.

Cooper-Chan notes in *Games in the Global Village*, the “non-controversial, apolitical nature [of variety shows] appeals to advertisers.”⁹⁰ Popular games on *Sábado Gigante* included randomly selecting keys to open doors that revealed prizes like a microwave or new house. *El festival de la una* featured young Chilean singer-songwriters. Beautiful women danced in unison on *Sabor Latino*. Variety shows came off as pure entertainment.

⁸⁸ Episode on June 24th, 1978, *Sábados Gigantes*, 1963-1986, Archivos Canal 13.

⁸⁹ Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate, and Verónica. “¡ESTAMOS EN GUERRA, SEÑORES!: EL RÉGIMEN MILITAR DE PINOCHET Y EL ‘PUEBLO’, 1973-1980.” *Historia (Santiago)* 43, no. 1 (June 2010): 163.

⁹⁰ Anne Cooper-Chen, *Games in the Global Village: A 50-Nation Study of Entertainment Television* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, c1994).

During a period of time marked by political repression and censorship, variety shows were an easy and safe bet for channels. The world of variety was fun and happy—Don Francisco literally led chants of “*¡estamos contentos, sí! / We are content, yes!*” Beneath staged frivolity of jingles and jokes, the variety show genre promoted a neoliberal message of economic choice through consumerism while adapting to its audience’s preferences.

The variety show entered Chile through the U.S. and Argentina. Mario Kreutzberger, later host Don Francisco, noticed potential in mixing the format of the *Ed Sullivan Show* he saw in New York with the musical news reports of Pipo Mancera in Argentina. Kreutzberger pitched the program to UCatólica’s Canal 13 in 1962. It started out in a Sunday afternoon timeslot as *Show Dominical* until it switched to Saturdays in 1963. What resulted was a three to eight hour mash up of dance numbers, audience competitions, travel documentaries, comedy skits, beauty pageants, singing performances, audience interviews, and unabashed product placement. *Sábado Gigante* reached its peak viewership in the 80s—at one point 80% of people watching TV on a Saturday evening were tuning in over the three other national channels. It also spawned multiple copies from *Sábados Alegres* and *Festival de la una* on its main competitor channel, TVN. The popularity of the genre transcended Latin America. By 1990 variety shows made up nearly 40% of all original television programming in the developing world.⁹¹ This figure makes sense from a cost perspective. Most of these shows were even better suited for profit than telenovelas. Unlike a scripted telenovela, there is no need to pay for writers or a large cast of actors—just the host and a few female presenters. The sets are either simple, colorful stages, or the show is filmed in a theater. The variety show was an easy, simple and fun way to fill the

⁹¹ Anne Cooper-Chen, *Games in the Global Village*, (Popular Press: New York, 2013) 24.

time—perfect for the newly defunded television channels—while creating yet another discursive space for audiences around the country to project their desires.

Appealing to advertisers was especially important since the Junta cut government funding while maintaining the 1970 communications law. The 1970 law had strict rules that prevented advertisements from interrupting a program.⁹² This meant that channels could only broadcast advertisements before and after a program limiting airtime. The channels found ways of maneuvering around the rule by increasing their hours of transmission. A CENECA study found that airtime increased by 83% from 1970 to 1982.⁹³ In 1979 *Ercilla*, a magazine, estimated that for every hour of content there was 30 minutes of advertisements.⁹⁴ A look at the *La Nación* TV schedule shows odd start times between programs—for example Canal 11 had *Oncelandia* start at 4:35 and afterwards *Patio plum* at 5:25—to accommodate the long commercial breaks.⁹⁵ However, no matter how much airtime a channel dedicated, viewers could easily stop watching TV during the commercial break and return at the beginning of a new program. Variety shows answered the channels' problems.

Variety shows approached their audiences as a consumer by allowing for more than just the simple product placement seen on telenovelas. Instead of simply having a character drink from a bottle of Fanta, the host of a variety show could pitch the product to the audience as the best thing ever. Don Francisco was particularly good at this with his breathless and animated listing of sponsors at the beginning and end of each segment. In an

⁹² Ley 17.377 art. 31; art. 15 del Reglamento de la Ley de TV

⁹³ Valerio Fuenzalida, *Transformaciones en la Estructura de TV Chilena*. Santiago: CENECA, 1983.

⁹⁴ Valerio Fuenzalida, *Estudios sobre la Televisión Chilena*, (Santiago, Chile: Corporación de Promoción Universitaria, 1981) 77.

⁹⁵ "Teleprogramas" *La Nación*. (Santiago, Chile) Sept. 16th, 1988.

episode in 1980 he manages to list in one breath, “La leche mas leche, Soprole! El chicle unico con liquido centro, Freshen Up! Pilsner Crystal: lo mejor, lo más economico!”⁹⁶ Ad agencies in Chile called this type of product placement “*los creatives*,” creative advertising that fell outside of the usual commercial.⁹⁷ One particularly successful method came in the form of sponsored competitions. For example, Winter, a company that sold sausages, sponsored a word guessing game to win a car.⁹⁸ After a woman wins a car and her ecstatic family runs up to congratulate her, Don Francisco looks to the camera and thanks Winter for their generosity before plugging their product one last time. Unlike an advertisement, sponsorships did not cause audiences to feel like they are being sold something. Instead, they shed a positive light on Winter as a generous benefactor. Variety shows gave agencies and corporation ample creative space to entice viewers that wasn’t restricted by any telecommunications laws.

Additionally, advertisers found variety shows particularly attractive because they catered to a valuable audience: families. Fiske argues that families not individuals are the “appropriate social unit” of television.⁹⁹ In 1985 the average family unit was 4.5 people.¹⁰⁰ By 1988, there was one television for every four Chileans.¹⁰¹ These numbers mean that there was around one television per family unit in Chile by the late 1980s. Variety shows played perfectly into the routine of the family unit. *Sábado Gigante* aired in the afternoons on Saturday. The show usually started with *Clan Infantil* or Children’s Clan, a segment

⁹⁶ Episode on Feb. 23rd, 1980, Archivos Canal 13, *Sabado Gigante*.

⁹⁷ Juan Carlos Altamirano. *¿TV or Not TV-Una Mirada Interna de la Television*. (Santiago, Chile: Planeta, 2006) 550.

⁹⁸ *Sabados Gigantes*, 1987.

⁹⁹ John Fiske, *Reading Television* (New York: Routledge, 2003).111.

¹⁰⁰ Chile ING, “La Familia Chilena en el Tiempo” *Estadísticas del Bicentenario*, Dec. 2010.

¹⁰¹ María Elena Hermosilla, *Evaluation de la Experiencia de CENECA en recepción activa de la televisión*.

where kids would make mini news reports on local news and play quiz games. As the afternoon wore on segments targeted older audiences: a matchmaking game that paired up high school students for a first date around tourists' attractions in Santiago took up the second hour. The remaining hours were aimed more directly at adults with various competitions to win products, comedy sketches, and cameos from famous singers. Unlike telenovelas, which catered to primarily adults, variety shows had something for everyone in the family increasing the possibilities for advertisement.

Variety shows' ability to harness advertising and promote consumerism was a direct response to the Junta's neoliberal goals. After the controversial approval of the Constitution of 1980, Pinochet declared that "*Al final de este período, uno de cada siete chilenos tendrá automóvil, uno de cada cinco tendrá television, y uno de cada siete poseerá teléfono.* /At the end of this period, one in every seven Chileans will have a car, one in every five will have a television, and one of every seven will have a telephone."¹⁰² Pinochet wasn't just listing out goals to inform. These numbers meant progress. Under his rule, gone were the days of food scarcity and the empty shelves of Allende's presidency. Instead more and more Chileans could have the comforts of a car, TV and phone. These statements also mark the ownership of commodities as a status symbol. The TV was more than just a form of entertainment; it marked the socio-economic success of a family. To watch was a privilege, and the more people who could afford this privilege the better the country was doing.

Variety shows spoke to this expanding audience of TV owners. Even more so than telenovelas, the audience directly participated in the spectacle. They were not simply an off screen laugh track. Any member could be called upon for commentary. For example in an

¹⁰² Oscar Contardo and Macarena Garcia, *La Era Ochentera* (Planeta Chile: Santiago, 2016), 14.

episode of *Sábado Gigante* in 1986, Don Francisco walked into the audience and asked various women for their recipes using El Pollo's flavoring.¹⁰³ The participants were often average people instead of insanely beautiful actors— although attractive hosts and presenters often surrounded them. A person watching at home can think, "That could be me." The competitions that contestants participated in all depend on luck, there was often no strategy or knowledge involved. For example, in an episode in 1981 sponsored by Soprole, a yogurt company, the couples played a game of charades. Although only the winner got the big prize, a TV set, everyone else still left with a large supply of Soprole yogurt. No one loses by coming onto the show. Additionally, during every episode there was a *sorteo* or lottery. A presenter would randomly choose postcards from a spinning basket and send the weekly prizes to the addresses on the cards. Even those sitting at home had the chance to win. This all had the effect of acclimating audiences to active participation with Altamirano's "plaza virtual" described in the previous chapter. Anyone could be on screen, broadcasted into living rooms around the country.

The emphasis on luck in variety tempered the visibility of classism. No participant needed to have a certain education level or skill to win a game. Many of the participants on shows like *Sábado Gigante* were of the working class. There would often be moments where Don Francisco or Enrique Maluenda of *Festival de la una*, make fun of a participant for their heavy non-Santiago accent, or for acting overly excited to win a prize. Yet the vast majority of the mocked participants simply laughed along. There was an implicit understanding amongst everyone watching that they all wanted to be more middle class with the big houses, cars, TVs and supplies of branded foods that these shows gave away.

¹⁰³ Episode on August 8th, 1984. *Sábado Gigante*, Archivos Canal 13.

Variety shows were crafted around the ideas of “anticipatory socialization,” where people of a lower class see the actions people of a higher class as a model they should emulate.¹⁰⁴ The product placements, competitions, and lotteries in conjunction with Pinochet’s claims that more and more Chileans would attain this life style worked to convince viewers and participants that they would achieve that goal. Variety put down the minority—in this case the lower class—in order to promote a new homogenized consumer culture.

While the ideas of audience engagement and everyone winning seem positive, media scholar John Fiske argued in *Television Culture*, that variety shows are “bearers of capitalist and patriarchal ideologies.”¹⁰⁵ The hosts would often end their opening monologue with an ode to their sponsors. The shows constantly repeated jingles throughout that help the audience learn and remember products: “*con Mazola no estás sola!*” In a way, these tunes almost became anthems to consumerism as the audience chimed in upon recognizing the songs throughout the show. All the while the always-male host acted as a *patron*-like figure leading the audience and offering advice on how to spend money and what to aspire to be.

However, just being the bearer of a capitalist message isn’t enough. Switching a TV channel is easy, especially during a three to eight hour show. The onus was on the show to capture the audience’s attention. Behind all of the inventive product placements, competitions, and fancy prizes, the variety show with its long runtime was especially at the viewer’s whim. For every *Sábado Gigante* there was another show that failed. Variety shows were especially susceptible to ratings. Because there was very little overhead and no plot to wrap up, channels could easily cut a show if ratings fell. For example when TVN

¹⁰⁴ John Fiske, *Reading Television* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁰⁵ John Fiske, *Television Culture*, (Routledge Classics: New York, 2010) 271.

struggled to compete with *Sábado Gigante*, executives decided to move *Vamos a Ver* and *Festival de la Una* to an earlier timeslot on Saturdays, and canceled *Sábados Alegres*.

Variety shows relied heavily on their hosts as the main source of continuity amongst a massive rotating cast of performers, presenters, and participants. Referring back to Jauss's theories of identification, the host of a variety program usually fell under a combination of a relatable hero and an admirable perfect hero.¹⁰⁶ A relatable host made all of the heavy product placement and audience interaction feel like an expression of "the public's feelings, their likes and desires in a natural and spontaneous way."¹⁰⁷ The patron-like figure of the host handing out advice only worked if the audience actually had a reason to look up to the host. Luckily for *Sábado Gigante*, Mario Kreutzberger, the man behind Don Francisco, fulfilled these requirements. In terms of relateability, Kreutzberger had no qualms making fun of himself, and presenting as a "kind of jovial '*gordito*,' a bit of a fat macho, always laughing."¹⁰⁸ Kreutzberger was also widely admired for creating the *Teletón* in 1978, a 27-hour telethon to raise money for kids with cerebral palsy. This gave him an image of a man who wasn't just interested in money even as he repeated advertisement slogans every Saturday. This admiration extended beyond his charity, in the 1989 election, various news polls showed that Chileans would support his presidential campaign should he run—Kreutzberger, however, always kept his political views private to avoid

¹⁰⁶ Hans Robert Jauss, "Interaction Patterns of Identification with the Hero" in: *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, 152.

¹⁰⁷ Juan Carlos Altamirano. *¿TV or Not TV-Una Mirada Interna de la Televisión*. (Santiago, Chile: Planeta, 2006) 484.

¹⁰⁸ "Meet Don Francisco, Host of the TV Show 'Sábado Gigante,' and a Chilean Son of Holocaust Survivors," *Tablet Magazine*, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/114619/the-giant-of-sabado-gigante>.

controversy for his show and *Teletón*.¹⁰⁹ This all suggests that audiences were willing to tune into hours of *Sábado Gigante* over other shows because the bearer of the neoliberal message was someone they related to and admired. The variety show had to give the audience something they wanted or the viewers could easily switch the channel to find something else.

Former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson once noted, “All television is educational. The only question is: what does it teach?”¹¹⁰ What did variety shows teach? The shows told their audience what brands are worthy of their attention: the ones that support the happy worry-free world of the variety show. They taught their audiences that they could be happy with the right vacuum cleaner, or relax with the best vacation. And judging by the ratings and success of shows like *Sábado Gigante* or *Festival de la una* this was something audiences readily accepted—even craved. However the catch was that audiences had to be willing to accept these lessons from the hosts that entered their living rooms every weekend. While variety shows helped channels attain economic independence and promoted the Junta’s vision of a market economy, they also created yet another interactive space on television to express their desires and dreams.

¹⁰⁹ “Mario Kreutzberger: Mi Mayor Temor Es Fracasar,” *Cooperativa.cl*, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.cooperativa.cl/noticias/entretencion/television/don-francisco/mario-kreutzberger-mi-mayor-temor-es-fracasar/2010-11-06/071404.html>.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Anne Cooper-Chen, *Games in the Global Village*, (Popular Press: New York, 2013) 37.

Chapter 4: The No campaign and Television as a Disseminator and Organizer



An image from the No Franja, TVN, 1988

In the living room of a mansion decorated with landscape paintings and silk chairs, three admen stand in front of a small color TV and a poster featuring a quarter of a rainbow standing over two black block letters forming the word NO. One of the admen inserts a tape and addresses the room, "Today, Chile thinks of her future." The video starts with a Technicolor image of people running up a hill and then cuts to images of a wild horse prancing, ballerinas dancing, families cooking, and a young couple on a picnic. The background music is a man's voice crooning in Spanish, "because in spite of what they say/

I have freedom of thought/ because I feel that it's time/ to gain liberty.”¹¹¹ When the video ends the camera turns to the group of men sitting in the room, all leaders of various recently legalized Chilean political parties. The men stare blankly at the admen. One finally responds, “*esto me pareció comercial de Coca-Cola/* to me, this appears like a Coca-Cola commercial.”¹¹²

The above scene is from Pablo Larraín’s 2012 Academy-Award nominated film, *No*. The film followed the efforts of fictionalized advertisement executive, Rene, to create an election campaign to defeat Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite. While Larraín’s film is certainly a dramatization and not a factual documentary—those involved in the campaign criticized the film for overemphasizing the effect of the advertisements—the above scene, which didn’t occur in real life, nonetheless expertly illustrates the unprecedented and creative nature of campaigning leading up to the plebiscite on October 5th, 1988.

The foundations for the 1988 plebiscite were set in the Constitution of 1980. In April of 1978, Pinochet announced that the Junta would create the Council of State to draft a new constitution that would set the terms for a democratic transition. A national plebiscite held on September 11th, 1980 would vote on this new Constitution. At the time legal opposition did not even exist as Pinochet outlawed all political parties in 1977.¹¹³ Nearly two thirds of Chileans voted in favor of a new constitution; however, the plebiscite’s result was widely disputed and considered a fraud.¹¹⁴ There was no national education plan to explain the components of the new constitution or a national discussion in the media. The Junta did not

¹¹¹ Pablo Larrain, *No [Videorecording]* (Culver City, Calif: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2013).

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Lawson, George. *Negotiated Revolutions: The Czech Republic, South Africa and Chile*. (New York: Routledge, 2017).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

set up any voter registration rolls. All a citizen or permanent resident had to do was present a their national identity card at any polling station—this could allow for one person to easily vote many times at different stations. Additionally, all blank votes were counted as “yes” votes for the constitution.¹¹⁵

Despite all of the obvious markers of voter fraud, the Constitution of 1980 was approved and enacted on March 11th, 1981. Pinochet presented the constitution as a “constitution of liberty” that created a “new democracy that will be authoritarian, protected, integrating, technically modern and with authentic social participation.”¹¹⁶ These were essentially euphemisms that legalized the Junta and gave broad powers to Pinochet. The Council of National Security (COSENA) formed the executive with Pinochet on top as the president. The constitution also set up Pinochet’s first eight-year term as president. In 1988 there would be another plebiscite in which the Military Junta could nominate one individual as a candidate for president and then call for a vote on the individual. It came as no surprise in 1988 that the Junta, nominated Pinochet for yet another eight-year term in office. This vote “yes” or “no” to another eight-years of Pinochet became the basis of the fateful 1988 national plebiscite.

Since the coup of 1973, mainstream media coverage of Pinochet’s opposition either did not exist or cast opponents as “extremists” or “terrorists.” In some cases news channels explicitly edited or staged footage to portray dissenters of the regime as violent terrorists. Arturo Castillo, a journalist for *60 Minutos* a TVN daily news show, revealed in 2012 that the show in conjunction with the Chilean military had staged the takeover of a communist

¹¹⁵ J. Widner. “Chile 1980,” *Princeton University* Accessed April 9, 2017. <https://www.princeton.edu/~pcwcr/reports/chile1980.html>.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

guerilla hideout in El Tume in 1980.¹¹⁷ The segment showed a shaky camera following uniformed soldiers engaged in a gunfight with guerillas in the forest. After a lengthy fight the military overpowers the guerillas and investigates their hideout where they find machine guns and explosives. The segment ends with a voiceover stating that a local in El Tume expressed gratitude towards the military stating, “*puedo estar tranquilo junto a mi familia porque creo que nadie y nada va a perturbar la paz de la zona/ I can be safe with my family because I believe nobody and nothing will disturb the peace in the area.*”¹¹⁸ The segment was entirely made up. A gunfight never occurred in El Tume. *60 Minutos* and the Chilean Military staged the entire segment in order to push the narrative that the opposition was violent and extremist—but most of all to justify and legitimize the military dictatorship under Pinochet.

The moderate Christian Democrats had made various attempts to negotiate a transition to democracy with the Junta that all failed. Many members of the party actually supported the coup in 1973, under the impression that the military would eventually hand over the government to the party to call for elections. Instead, the Junta declared martial law and outlawed political parties, effectively quelling organized opposition in the form of established politics. In 1987, Pinochet legalized political parties in preparation for the plebiscite. For the first time, political parties could now operate above ground and make open efforts to form a coalition. On February 2nd, 1988 thirteen different political parties from the Christian Democrats to the Radical Party to the Socialists announced the creation of the *Concertación de Partidos por el No*, and three more parties would join in the next

¹¹⁷ TVN - *Tu Historia Es Mi Historia Capitulo 3*, accessed April 19, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6cYy6cR6xU>.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

three months. The *Concertación* represented the united effort of 16 opposition parties to obtain a victory for the “no” vote.

The election campaign for the 1988 plebiscite marked a big shift in media coverage for the opposition. Each day television channels “would set aside free airtime for campaign advertising” for 30 minutes called the *franja de propaganda electoral* in the month before the plebiscite.¹¹⁹ All the national TV channels from Canal 13 to TVN were required to broadcast a two back to back 15 minute segments from the “yes” and “no” side from 11:45 pm to 11:15 pm on weekdays and 11:30 pm to midnight on weekends during the month preceding the election.¹²⁰ Although the *franja* took place outside of primetime television hours, the 30-minute segments reached a rating of 65%—nearly 10 points higher than the most popular show at the time, *Sábado Gigante*.¹²¹ The *franja* marked the first time that any opposition to the Junta had the ability to openly and directly communicate with the entire nation through public television.

It is important to note that the *franja* represented the only opening of the press to the opposition. Television became the only mass medium of expression for the *Concertación*. Mainstream national radio stations and newspapers were not required to give equal airtime or space to the opposition. In fact many were favorable to Pinochet. In the case of newspapers, the owner of Chile’s largest newspaper company with nation-wide coverage, *El Mercurio*, Augustín Edwards Eastman, had actually received funding from the

¹¹⁹ Taylor C. Boas, “Voting for Democracy: Campaign Effects in Chile’s Democratic Transition,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 57, no. 2 (June 1, 2015): 73.

¹²⁰ Stephen Crofts Wiley, “Transnation: Globalization and the Reorganization of Chilean Television in Early 1990s,” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 50:3, 675.

¹²¹ Taylor Boas, “Voting for Democracy: Campaign Effects in Chile’s Democratic Transition,” 74.

CIA to foster the coup in 1973.¹²² The other giant in the media industry, *Consortio Periodístico de Chile* (COPESA), also had direct ties to the dictatorship. The owner, Álvaro Saieh, invested heavily in the private pension system that the Chicago Boys put into place in 1981. Together COPESA, and *El Mercurio* by 1988 owned 95% of all print media in Chile.¹²³ Therefore, with a significant monopoly on print media and state control of television, the 15-minute nightly *franja*, represented the most significant, if not only, method of open communication with the voting public for the *Concertación*.

The role of television in the 1988 plebiscite was certainly impactful and important. Nonetheless it is important to point out that the *Concertación* didn't just run a catchy marketing campaign. The *Concertación* lead countless voter registration drives since many voter rolls were destroyed after the coup in 1973. The controversial 1980 constitutional plebiscite eight years earlier was the most recent national vote, and there hadn't been a presidential election since 1970. Therefore, an entire generation of eligible voters had never lived under democracy with the right to vote. The *Concertación* ran a voter education program to combat this. Pamphlets titled, "*Aprendamos a votar*" or "Learn to vote" gave ten steps on what to do on the day of the vote. The pamphlets gave specific instructions on how to maintain the privacy and secrecy while voting, and assured that there would always be two members of the *Concertación* at every voting center to answer questions.¹²⁴ All of this worked to alleviate the fears of No voters against retaliation from the dictatorship and the possibility of vote manipulation. During the *franja* the *Concertación* ran an infomercial

¹²² Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*. (New York: The New Press, 2003) 96. .

¹²³ Sergio Godoy Etcheverry, *Publicamente Rentable: evaluación de la TV Pública chilena orientada al Mercado*, 93.

¹²⁴ Concertación. "Aprendamos a votar." *Memoria Chilena* 1988

explaining the importance of voting featuring Patricio Aylwin, then leader of the Christian Democrats, stating, “*una elección es eso: cada cierto tiempo, todos los chilenos somos convocados a soñar y pensar el Chile que queremos/ an election is this: every once in a while, all Chileans are summoned to dream and think of the Chile they want.*”¹²⁵ By the time of the election the *Concertación* managed to register around 7.5 million people, and collected enough signatures to register 22,000 poll watchers.¹²⁶ Supporters of the regime tried to discredit many of these efforts warning in *El Mercurio* that those who registered were mainly young and “*de la extrema izquierda/ of the extreme left.*”¹²⁷ With these educational programs and the TV visibility, the *Concertación* helped reestablish the values and tradition of voting.

While the advertisement campaign did not completely determine the outcome of the plebiscite, it certainly supplemented other programs and increased visibility. For example, according to post-electoral survey data 22% of people who voted on either side went to rallies or marches; however, 72% followed the election on TV.¹²⁸ For many Chileans, it would be difficult to travel or find time to participate in rallies or marches in support or in opposition to Pinochet. However, the TV, by then a standard in every home, was an accessible way to learn and follow the election. The No campaign marked a shift in the political role of television in Chilean political life. While telenovelas and variety shows created an interactive space for Chilean social and consumerist lives, no such thing existed for Chilean political lives. However, with the No *franja*, instead of serving as a disseminator

¹²⁵ *Concertación. Franja Electoral*. September 1988.

¹²⁶ “Informe,” *La Nación* (Santiago, Chile) Oct. 5th, 1988.

¹²⁷ Unspecified *El Mercurio* article quoted in *Pluma y Pincel* issue no. 32, March 1988.

¹²⁸ Taylor Boas, “Voting for Democracy: Campaign Effects in Chile’s Democratic Transition,” *Latin American Politics and Society*, 74.

of propaganda, TV became a discursive and spatial connection between the individual and the election. For the opposition, it became the first open and direct connection without the threat of oppression with the general public.

Despite the equal *franja* airtime, the plebiscite was in no way an equitable battle. Military-appointed provincial governors and mayors ran the logistics of the election as campaign chiefs.¹²⁹ While both sides were prohibited from broadcasting commercials outside of the allotted 15 minutes, most of the news channels were still controlled by the Junta. Therefore, the opposition had no way to directly influence the portrayal and the publicity of their activities in the news. Even the existence of the *franja* only came about after various foreign diplomats including the U.S. Ambassador to Chile, Harry G. Barnes Jr., notified the Junta that plebiscite wouldn't be considered legitimate without freedom of the press. The *franja* was the Junta's compromise and the convenient example of freedom of press that Pinochet could point to when asked to show proof.

It needs to be said that the plebiscite was not a true election. No other candidates were allowed to run. This was essentially a referendum on a person. The ballot only consisted of Pinochet's name and then the words "si" and "no" written beneath for voters to mark.¹³⁰ When the Junta first drafted the Constitution of 1980 that laid the foundations for the 1988 plebiscite, they were positive that Pinochet would win an election. A botched attempt on Pinochet's life by the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR), a communist guerilla group, in September 1986 fractured the opposition causing the more moderate

¹²⁹ "Chile - Authoritarianism Defeated by Its Own Rules," accessed April 19, 2017, <http://countrystudies.us/chile/88.htm>.

¹³⁰ Jose Morgado, "La Historia del Plebiscito" *24 Horas*. October 2, 2013. <http://www.24horas.cl/politica/la-historia-del-plebiscito-y-que-realmente-se-voto-hace-25-anos-870979>

Christian Democrats and Socialists to distance themselves from the Communists. The assassination attempt not only played into the regime's narrative of a militant leftist threat, but also gave the Junta an excuse to crackdown on any opposition.

Ironically, Pinochet might've designed his own downfall with the Constitution of 1980. The 1988 referendum gave the distinct and fragmented opposition something easy to plan for and rally around: ousting Pinochet. By 1988 public opinion polls found that 73% of Chilean didn't trust the Junta, 64% believed the military should have less power, and 69% didn't think Pinochet should be the military candidate.¹³¹ Had the referendum been an actual election between Pinochet and members of other political parties, the *Concertación* might've fallen apart, unable to find a strong candidate or unite around one person. Had Pinochet not forced his own nomination and selected another military leader or an appointed technocrat, the Junta rule could've continued. Pinochet and the Junta had no way of knowing that eight years later the opposition would manage to unite, the Chilean people would demand change, or that increasing international human rights pressure would prevent them from manipulating votes. Yet, all of their efforts to legalize and legitimize their regime in 1980 would backfire to create their downfall.

Despite the systemic advantages of the pro-Pinochet side, the *Concertación* made use of the slight benefits they did have. In terms of the funding, the *Concertación* had broad international support. The *Concertación* received around \$15 million dollars in 1988 from organizations such as the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy, the World Council of Churches, the Ford Foundation, and the AFL-CIO.¹³² This international pressure extended

¹³¹ George Lawson, *Negotiated Revolutions: The Czech Republic, South Africa and Chile*.

¹³² Stephen Crofts Wiley, "Assembled agency: media and hegemony in the Chilean transition to civilian rule," 677.

to Pinochet who was pressured into allowing international observers to monitor the plebiscite and announced that he would honor the results of the election, whichever way it went. The *Concertación* was also expertly organized. They formed a non-partisan team, the *Comando por el No*, to take over strategic planning of the campaign. Prior to the creation of any *franja*, the *Comando* formed a *Comité Técnico* (technical committee) made up of social scientists, advertising experts, and TV crews to run psychological and sociological analysis. Ironically, the Junta had pushed out many leftist writers and directors from the TV and film industry and into the less politically substantial advertising industry.¹³³ This quickly became an asset for the *Concertación*. With the regime's neoliberal policies and the cutting of funding to national television channels, the advertising industry experienced a boom under the dictatorship. Advertising jumped from an industry of \$7 million U.S. dollars in 1975 to \$150 million in 1984.¹³⁴ Chilean television made up 50% of that industry—over two times the percentage of countries like the U.S. and Canada.¹³⁵ This meant that the group of Chileans who worked extensively with audiences to find out what commercial or creative form of product placement could get an audience to buy a product, was now adapting those skills to a political campaign. These were the people with the resources, expertise, and incentive to join the *Concertación* and craft an effective and sophisticated television campaign.

¹³³ J. de Aguirre, "Primer movimiento del concierto," in "Assembled agency: media and hegemony in the Chilean transition to civilian rule," 670.

¹³⁴ Maria de la Luz Hurtado. "Repression and Innovation" *Media and Politics in Latin America*, 103-115, ed. Elizabeth Fox, (London: Sage. 1988).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 107

The *Commando* decided early on that the campaign would focus on “undecided” and “soft” voters—“people who leaned towards one side but weren’t firmly committed.”¹³⁶ Genaro Arriagada, one of the directors of the No campaign described receiving money from the Soros Foundation to help the *Commando* create focus groups of undecided voters, run *franjas*, and record responses.¹³⁷ This continued on a larger scale during the 27 days the *franjas* broadcasted, as analysts adjusted programming to fit responses. This form of political campaigning marked a shift from top down politics of Pinochet’s Yes campaign where the political elite disseminated their ideas to the public to a grassroots level analysis of what political messages could entice voters. The left wing pop culture magazine, *Pluma y Pincel* followed Arturo Hernández, a history professor volunteering for the *Concertación*, as he went door to door in Santiago surveying residents. Hernández’s goal was to gauge the general opinion towards violence, asking questions like, “¿a qué cree usted que se debe la violencia?/ what do you believe should be done about violence?”¹³⁸ From questions about social issues analysts could gather information on what issues voters were the most concerned about and what they expected. The final question Hernández asks is “¿Milita usted en algún partido político?/ Are you active in any political party?”¹³⁹ In hopes of gauging if the voter is on the *Concertación*’s side or not. Through extensive nationwide surveyors like Hernández, the *Concertación* quickly identified that the reasons undecided or soft voters were hesitant to vote “no” stemmed from two main fears. The first focused on

¹³⁶ Stephen Crofts Wiley, “Assembled agency: media and hegemony in the Chilean transition to civilian rule,” 679. and Taylor Boas, “Voting for Democracy: Campaign Effects in Chile’s Democratic Transition,” 74.

¹³⁷ Olga Khazan. “4 Things the Movie ‘NO’ Left Out About the Real-Life Chile,” *The Atlantic*. March 29, 2013. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/03/4-things-the-movie-no-left-out-about-real-life-chile/274491/>

¹³⁸ “Quien le teme a las encuestas.” *Pluma y Pincel*. 11. De Agosto 1988. 10.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

the present state of repression in Chile: people were afraid to express opposition. The second revealed a fear of the future, of the “political, economic and social disorder,” that could result from Pinochet’s loss.¹⁴⁰ After identifying these obstacles, the *Commando* began the production of their *franjas*.

The *Concertación*’s first *franja* directly subverted the Junta-established narrative of dissidents and offered a bright outlook on the future with the positive slogan, “*Chile, la alegría ya viene*/Chile, happiness is coming.” The slogan is now ubiquitous with the plebiscite and featured a music video showing Chileans of all backgrounds dancing and singing:

“*Vamos a decir que no, con la fuerza de mi voz
Vamos a decir que no, yo lo canto sin temor
Vamos a decir que no, todos juntos a triunfar
Vamos a decir que no, por la vida y por la paz*”¹⁴¹

“We are going to say no, with the strength of my voice
We are going to say no, I will sing it without fear
We are going to say no, everyone together will triumph
We are going to say no, for life and for peace.”

At the end of the video a rainbow representing the colors of various parties in the *Concertación* slowly appears as the word NO scrawls across the screen.

Conversely, the first *franja* for the “yes” side begins with video footage from 1973. Men and women stand in lines for bread outside an empty grocery store. The images then switch to a modern elementary school, where the voiceover claims, “*este es un país ganador y no merecemos volver al pasado*/ this is a winning country and we don’t deserve to return

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Crofts Wiley, “Assembled agency: media and hegemony in the Chilean transition to civilian rule,” *Media, Culture and Society*, 679

¹⁴¹ Concertación. *Franja Electoral*. September 1988.

to the past.”¹⁴² Then talking heads of everyday women representing mothers, daughters, and wives list off the problems of the past: illiteracy, infant mortality, terrorism. The “yes” side focused on the past and pushed the long-established narrative that Pinochet brought the country out of turmoil marked by food shortages and Communist terror. These images were nothing new for the Chilean audience. The “no” side’s decision to focus on the future and general feelings of hope and possibility presented a perfect foil to the “yes” side. This message of “happiness is coming” became the rallying cry of the opposition broadcast around the nation.

In order to address the still-salient fears regarding expressions of political dissent, the *Commando* began organizing peaceful rallies and marches throughout Chile. While the Junta would grant the *Concertación* permits to host these rallies, they would often be forced into more remote locations outside of city centers to reduce attendance. Nonetheless these marches offered a physical outlet of expression for many Chileans in the opposition. The *Commando* would often send their film crews—and invite foreign press for added security—to record these marches for inclusion in the *franjas*. While the most voters wouldn’t have attended these rallies, the images of other Chileans waving the No rainbow flag happily on the streets broadcast throughout the nation normalized the opposition and emboldened other Chileans to join the opposition. On October 1st, just four days before the plebiscite the *Concertación* organized a massive *Marcha de la alegría* (March for Happiness) around the country that packed the city centers from Santiago to Concepción.

The *Concertación*’s very simple message of “happiness if coming” reflected their ultimate goal of winning the “no” vote. None of the *Concertación*’s messages gave specifics

¹⁴² *Sí. Franja Electoral*. September 1988.

on the oppositions plans for a transition to democracy. Every message was very general and overall positive. This decision was not only a deliberate decision to keep a diverse group of political parties united, but also a method to create the message with the broadest appeal. This meant that the “*Concertación* made a strategic decision to limit its discussion of human rights violations and to exclude altogether the issue of punishment for military crimes.”¹⁴³ Any talk of justice or amnesty would either galvanize the Junta or offend the victims and survivors of the dictatorship’s human rights abuses. Arriagada admitted, “Pinochet had the support of the upper class and business community. Our conviction was that if we ... put in jail or [exiled] the people of Pinochet, that will be the end of the country. It was necessary to have room for everybody.”¹⁴⁴ This approach alienated some of the opposition parties. The Communist Party of Chile and certain branches of the Socialist Party did not join the *Concertación* out of fear that their participation would only further legitimize the plebiscite and reinforce the power of the Junta if they lost. For others, like Arriagada, this compromise was necessary to achieve democracy even if it meant they had to play the dictatorship’s game.

In the end the *Concertación’s* efforts in understanding and responding to the public paid off. A study done during the month before the plebiscite by the *Centro de Estudios Públicos* on public opinion towards both campaigns, found that voters found “*la propaganda del ‘No’ estuvo más orientada a la gente, o más de persona a persona que la del ‘Sí.’* / the propaganda of ‘No’ was more oriented towards the people, or more personal than

¹⁴³ Stephen Crofts Wiley, “Assembled agency: media and hegemony in the Chilean transition to civilian rule,” *Media, Culture and Society*, 686.

¹⁴⁴ Olga Khazan. “4 Things the Movie ‘NO’ Left Out About the Real-Life Chile,” *The Atlantic*. March 29, 2013.

the ‘Yes.’”¹⁴⁵ Another study testing voters on the content of the *franja* found that more people answered questions about the “No” side correctly, showing that the message was if not more effective, at least more memorable. The *Concertación* silence on many of the regimes atrocities and the anti-democratic processes of the plebiscite came from the focus of creating a winning campaign based on the desires and concerns of the voters they surveyed.

In the early morning of the plebiscite on October 5th power outages occurred in large sections of the country. Leaders of the *Concertación* immediately sent out messages through interviews on radio shows stating, “*no dejarse atemorizar por estos sucesos y acudir a las urnas mañana para emitir el voto desde la primera hora* / do not be intimidated by these incidents and go to the polls to cast the vote from the first hour.”¹⁴⁶ Patricio Aylwin, the leader of the Christian Democrats, then gave an interview on TV begging supporters to maintain peace, because anyone who “practices violence, in fact, helps Pinochet.”¹⁴⁷ While the Junta never admitted to purposefully shutting down power, the incident set off a tense start to the plebiscite. The actual voting process, aside from long waits at the polls, started and finished without any reported acts of violence. Although exit polling seemed to indicate that a “No” victory was imminent, many still held their breath. Despite the positive energy around the “No” vote, even those who voted for “No” didn’t believe they would actually win. A poll done earlier in July found that 50% of those who said they would vote “No” believed that the “Yes” side would still win, while 90% of those who said they would vote “Yes”

¹⁴⁵ Centro de Estudios Públicos, “Estudio Social y de Opinión Pública,” Septiembre 1988, 38. https://www.cepchile.cl/cep/site/artic/20160304/asocfile/20160304092754/DOCUMENTO_encSep1988.pdf

¹⁴⁶ *Informe Especial*. “El 5 de Octubre: La Historia No Contada.” October 6th, 2013.

Chilevision. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhRi3YpeKiE>

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

thought their side would win.¹⁴⁸ The Junta likely knew around 7:30pm that the “No” side had won. However, Pinochet stalled the announcement and the national channels played American cartoons even though all of the national channels had scheduled all day election programming.¹⁴⁹ The U.S. Embassy cabled the White House stating, “the GOC is obviously sitting on voting results” and could potentially enact a plan that U.S. Ambassador to Chile, Harry Barnes, had predicted and feared:

“Pinochet's plan is simple: A) if the "Yes" is winning, fine: B) if the race is very close rely on fraud and coercion: C) If the "NO" is likely to win clear then use violence and terror to stop the process. To help prepare the atmosphere the CNI will have the job of providing adequate violence before and on 5 October. Since we know that Pinochet's closest advisors now realize he is likely to lose, we believe the third option is the one most likely to be put into effect with probable substantial loss of life.”¹⁵⁰

None of Barnes’s fears came to pass. Around midnight that day, news shows around the country—after a tense stalling of a press conference from the Junta—announced that the “no” option had won 55% to 43%.¹⁵¹ This was a serious victory for the *Concertación*. That very morning, *La Nación’s* front page declared that the Yes vote was predicted to defeat the

¹⁴⁸ Gallup in *Pluma y Pincel* Issue no. 34. 11 de August 1988.

¹⁴⁹ Shirley Christian, “Pinochet Accepts His Defeat,” *The Herald Tribune*. October 7th, 1988. and “Teleprogramas,” *La Nación*. Chile, Oct. 5th, 1988.

¹⁵⁰ “OSCARs: DECLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS TELL HISTORY BEHIND BEST FOREIGN FILM NOMINATION, ‘NO.’” Accessed April 10, 2017.

<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB413/>.

¹⁵¹ Taylor Boas, “Voting for Democracy: Campaign Effects in Chile’s Democratic Transition,” 63.

No vote by 5 points.¹⁵² Instead of flooding into the street to celebrate, the *Concertación* warned everyone to stay inside and “celebrate in the house,” not wanting to give the Junta any excuse to attack the No side under the pretense of possible violence.¹⁵³

Despite the official announcement, around 1:00AM, Pinochet called in members of the Junta to use “the extraordinary powers to have the armed forces seize the capital,” Air Force commander Fernando Matthei was the first member of the Junta to refuse Pinochet. Then in a scene so dramatic it would hardly sound out of place in a telenovela, Secretary General of the Government, Sergio Valenzuela collapsed “from what turned out to be the first stage of a heart attack.”¹⁵⁴ As dramatic scenes of Pinochet’s split with the Junta played out in La Moneda, families of the “No” side celebrated tranquilly at home. Fernando Quilaleo, the eventual vice president of the Party for Democracy (PPD), spoke of that night:

“Yo en una cuneta escuchando la (radio) Cooperativa, no hubo necesidad de barricadas, habíamos ganado, parecía increíble... ‘¿A quienes les cuento que ganamos? ¡A los vecinos!’ Fue una celebración íntima, silenciosa y llena de angustia por lo que se venía”. / “I was on the curb listening to radio Cooperativa, there was no need for barricades, we had won, it seemed incredible...Who do we tell? The neighbors! It was an intimate, silent, and celebration full of anxiety for what was to come.”

It was with this quiet but significant victory that Chile’s transition to democracy began.

¹⁵² “Opción Si gana al No por 5 puntos,” *La Nacion*, Chile, Oct. 5th, 1988.

¹⁵³ *Informe Especial*. “El 5 de Octubre: La Historia No Contada.” October 6th, 2013.

¹⁵⁴ Department of Defense. “Chilean Junta Meeting, the Night of the Plebiscite,” Jan. 1st. 1989.

Conclusion

While the plebiscite ended on a note of hope, the image of a rainbow, and the tune of “happiness is coming,” the *Concertación* paid a heavy price for playing the dictatorship’s game. Pinochet maintained military and political positions until 2002, and to this day the 1980 Constitution governs Chile. In the final months of Pinochet’s regime, the Junta began to re-write legislation to consolidate power in the military and check the in-coming administration’s power. Much of this arose from efforts to protect members of the Junta from human rights investigations; however, the Junta also targeted television regulations. On September 30th, 1989, just six months before Pinochet was to hand over power to democratically elected Patricio Aylwin to restore democracy, the Junta passed Law No. 18.838 allowing the full privatization of TV.¹⁵⁵ The updated law in 1989 can be seen as a concession to democratize television, however, this was truly an effort to limit Aylwin’s ability to disseminate information via TV while maintaining military influence over media.

The new law revamped the *Consejo Nacional de Television* (CNTV) initially created in under the 1970 law to check incoming President Allende’s power, to act as a buffer to control content creation. CNTV existed to ensure “*los valores morales y culturales propios de la Nación; a la dignidad de las personas; a la protección de la familia*” the moral and cultural values of the Nation; the dignity of the people; the protection of the family” through power to deny or censure any new programming on television stations that broadcast in Chile.¹⁵⁶ The law that created CNTV also ensured that the military would retain the ability to appoint members to the council. Instead of the old council that included the directors of

¹⁵⁵ Pedro Santander, “Leyes de medios de Chile y Argentina,” *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* Vol. 19, Num. 2 (2013): 894.

¹⁵⁶ Ministerio del Interior, Ley-18.838, Sept. 30th, 1989.

each station and Minister of Education—under Pinochet these members were all Junta members—the President would nominate each person in the 11-member council. If the majority of the Senate voted in favor of the nominee then the candidate would be a member of the council. However to hold a leadership position in the council, the member must also be approved by military leadership. In fact the law encouraged naming members of the military to the council stating that council members could be award winning artists, university professors or the “*Oficial General de alguna de las Instituciones de las Fuerzas Armadas o de Carabineros de Chile/ Official General of any of the Institutions of the Armed Forces or the Police.*”¹⁵⁷ True to the recommendations of the law, Pinochet named Alfonso Márquez de la Plata, his Secretary of State, someone who had no experience in telecommunications but was a Junta insider, as the first President of CNTV, where he would stay until 1992. All of these stipulations meant that despite a return to democracy the military junta would still have the ability to control the media content and the flow of information in the TV industry.

The TV industry in Chile has never truly been independent or free of government intervention. Television’s late introduction was due to a combination of lack of governmental interest and funding. Then with the placement of the television industry in the hands of the universities, there was a marked desire to control content for largely educational and cultural reasons. However, this set the dangerous precedent of political maneuvering and manipulation of the television industry that started with the Christian Democrats and continued past the fall of Pinochet. The fact that the telecommunications law of 1970 stayed in effect until after the plebiscite proves that the legislative

¹⁵⁷ Ministerio del Interior, Ley-18.838, Sept. 30th, 1989.

maneuvering of an opposition party against the president could become the tool of a dictatorship. However politics, economics, and society work in strange ways. The Junta's contradictory compromise that kept television under state ownership while forcing economic independence by cutting funding compelled TV channels to drum up ratings. Channels changed programming models to favor addictive telenovelas and variety shows that attracted advertisements and sponsorships. These programs also included a diverse and sophisticated mechanism for audience participation that created an audiovisual space for connection and expression. By the time the 1988 plebiscite rolled around, these forces culminated in the research driven No campaign. Ultimately, television's role in the downfall of the dictatorship shows that in any system where there is choice, the masses matter, and the side that listens is the side that will win.

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