

The influence of memory at the beginning of Chile's transition to democracy (1987-1988)

Carolina García González¹

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the first few years of Chilean transition (1987-1988) from the perspective of historic memory. It considers the way in which the governments of Frei and the Unidad Popular, as well as the military coup and the dictatorship, were remembered, and how these memories marked the political and social development during this period, which led to the plebiscite of 1988. To this end, we shall consider the developments that made this election possible, the election campaigns of the rulers and of the opposition, and the reasons that explain the electoral result that made it possible for democracy to be restored in Chile after 17 years of dictatorship.

Key words: memory, transition to democracy, voting process, electoral campaign.

The transition towards democracy is without a doubt one of the most relevant events in recent Chilean history. Democracy was restored in the country after 17 years of dictatorship. However, this event isn't exceptional for its time, it is part of what is known as the Third Wave of Democratization; a period in which the Cold War came to its end and democratization processes started to proliferate in East Europe and South Africa. On a regional level, there was also a tendency towards democracy, as all other South American dictatorships had already fallen.

However, the characteristics of Chilean transition make it particularly striking on an international level; it is extremely attractive and awakens interest in other countries. Chile passed from a dictatorship of 17 years to a democratic government in peace and through consensus, without a breakup or an overthrow of general Pinochet's government, as happened in Argentina, or the death of the dictator, as Franco in Spain. This makes the Chilean transition a peculiar one.

On the other hand, these characteristics meant that many elements of the dictatorship remained and still remain in Chilean society and political system (mainly in the economic system and the protected democracy). This leads to a lack in consensus as to the duration of transition and the events that mark its end. In fact, there is a great diversity of postures about the moment in which transition (supposedly) ended. For some, transition concluded in March 1990 when Patricio Aylwin came to power, putting an end to the regime of Pinochet and beginning a democratically elected

¹ This article is an abstract of the thesis *El peso de la memoria en los inicios de la Transición. Chile, 1987-1988*, to apply for a degree in History at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. 2004. e-mail: cagarcig@gmail.com

government². For others, Chilean transition still hasn't ended and democracy is still today incomplete because of the persistence of the so-called "authoritarian enclaves" inherited from the period of the dictatorship, for example the binominal voting system³. Lastly, in an intermediate position there are those⁴ that postulate that transition ended on October 16th 1998 with the detention of Pinochet in London. This event would have put an end to the constant feeling of instability in the Chilean political system, caused by his constant presence in power, be it as President, Commander in Chief of the Army or senator for life. After his detention, Pinochet ceased to be untouchable, lost his impunity, and hence, the threat – represented by him - to the stability of the democratic regime disappeared.

Beyond the differences about the duration and the end of Chilean transition, what really matters for this analysis is the high degree of consensus about the event that marked its beginning. Practically every study about this process indicates that the origin of transition lies in the plebiscite of October 5th 1988, the plebiscite between *Yes* and *No*.

The issue we pretend to analyze in this process is *the weight of memory in the beginning of the transition to democracy in Chile*, identifying the 1988 plebiscite as the origin of the transitional process in Chile. We consider that the plebiscite's characteristics help to understand the process of transition and the treatment given to memory since the restoration of democracy.

The study of this issue is, firstly, justified by the usefulness it can have for Chilean society to understand from a historical perspective why the beginning of transition developed in the way it did, especially as historical studies about this subject are very rare. Secondly, it is justified by the importance the plebiscite between *Yes* and *No* had for the transitional process towards democracy. The triumph of *No*, headed by the regime's opposition, made it possible to reform the 1980 Constitution, to have free elections and put an end to the dictatorship of general Pinochet. And, thirdly, it is justified because memory has hardly been used as a perspective to understand Chile's recent past, even though it gives a pretty broad vision of the process in question, implying a political and social analysis. This analysis considers the effects the weight of collective memory from the end of the 1980s had in the way the 1988 plebiscite and the transition was conceived and developed.

The relationship between memory and history established for this investigation, states that memory is an object of history, that is to say, a perspective from which to reconstruct the past. Consequently, memory and history isn't the same thing. Until the 1960s, for historiography "written history was the one to shape collective memory, now the habitual process to access the collective memory of the past has been inverted and memory is located at the roots of history"⁵. This new conception of memory defines it as "a way to distinguish and link the past in relation to the present and future"⁶. "Memory is the tool with which society represents the materials, some fruitful, some sterile, that the past gives to construct the future"⁷. This means that when one makes history out of the memory one presently has about the past, one can not only understand and know what a memory of a certain event or process consists of, but one can also understand how a society that remembers organizes the present and plans the future. Through memory, societies learn from the past, and from these lessons they can justify its repetition or rejection, be it complete or partial, when faced with transforming the present to construct a certain wished-for future⁸.

² Manuel Antonio Garretón: "Balance y perspectivas de la democratización política chilena" in Amparo Menéndez Carrión and Alfredo Joignant (eds.), *La Caja de Pandora*. Santiago, Editorial Planeta, 1999, 58-59.

³ For a deeper analysis about authoritarian enclaves, see, among others: Carlos Huneeus, *El régimen de Pinochet*, Tomás Moulian: *Chile actual: Anatomía de un Mito*.

⁴ Álvaro Soto: *Transiciones a la Democracia en España y Chile. Una perspectiva comparada*. Publication pending.

⁵ Josefina Cuesta: "Memoria e Historia. Un estado de la cuestión", in Josefina Cuesta (ed.) *Memoria e Historia*, Revista Ayer, N° 32. Madrid, Marcial Pons Edicione, 1998, 164.

⁶ Norbert Lechner and Pedro Güell: "Construcción social de las Memorias en la Transición Chilena", in Amparo Menéndez Carrión and Alfredo Joignant (eds.), *La Caja de Pandora*. Santiago, Planeta/ Ariel, 1999, 186.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

In Chile, the events of the last four decades make it a country still divided by its past⁹. There is no consensus in Chilean society about the memory of this period in history. There are “different opinions about the causes of the crisis of democracy, the factors that led to military intervention in politics, the way in which the military exerted power and the changes they made in the economy and in politics. These divisions seep into different subjects of Chilean civic culture, like the characteristics of politics, its main institutions and the values that should prevail in them, and even the meaning of democracy”¹⁰. This is due to the fact that the democratic tradition that characterized 20th century Chile made society elaborate a traumatic memory of the following events: the crisis, radicalization and polarization that began during the government of Frei Montalva and reached unimagined levels during the Unidad Popular government, and that led to the military coup in September 1973 and the breaking up of democracy. The memories of the governments of Frei and especially of Allende were inevitably linked to the memory of the military coup and dictatorship. These memories coexist until today, and are in perpetual conflict to obtain legitimization as *the memory of society*, and this shows the fragmentation existing in Chilean society¹¹. While there are painful memories, others are triumphant; however they both have in common the traumatic character that originated them. “September 11th 1973 is experienced by Chileans as a rupture that – in personal as in national life- marks a sharp cut between before and after. The interpretation of the coup varies, but there is a tendency to understand it as an irruption that inverts everything”¹². Be they *momio*, *upeliento*, right-wing, Christian democrat or left-wing, the coup was seen by all as something that changed everything, for good or for bad. The facts that surrounded it, the scene in which it is remembered, a mix of grandiosity and terror, doubtlessly marked Chilean society, even the generations that were as yet unborn.

If we consider that this division still exists today, it is not difficult to imagine the force that memory and its divisions had in 1988.

The hypothesis of this investigation is that in 1988 the weight of the historic memory of the last 20 years of the country was extremely strong, and was characterized by the fear that these regrettable events, marked by the military coup, would happen again. This collective memory was traumatic and caused democracy to be identified with the “chaos” of the Unidad Popular. In turn, the government of the Unidad Popular was identified with the military coup and the ensuing repression and authoritarianism. While this collective memory contained a series of different memories about the causes, consequences and meanings of the coup, it was always characterized by that traumatic element, shown by the fear that reigned in Chilean society. Practically all Chileans had apprehensions about the possibility of restoring democracy. Some feared this would bring about a new Unidad Popular, others that it would derive in a new coup or that there would be a fraud to deny the opposition’s triumph and that there would be the worst of repressions against those who had dared to vote against the regime.

The political campaigns of *Yes* and *No* were constructed largely under influence of that memory and the fears that existed in society. The government of Pinochet used them to increase the fears of the chaos, disorder and instability the restoration of democracy would supposedly bring about. On the other hand, the opposition used them to conclude that it should act as far as possible from the confrontational behavior it had had during the Unidad Popular and the dictatorship, and pursued an image of unity, consensus and order so as to awaken in society the confidence that the triumph of NO in the plebiscite and the peaceful restoration of democracy were possible.

To develop this hypothesis, the beginning of Chilean transition will be analyzed starting from the weight collective memory had in the way the main events took place in that period. By

⁹ Carlos Huneeus: *Chile un país dividido. La actualidad del pasado*. Santiago, Catalonia, 2003, 15.

¹⁰ *Idem*.

¹¹ Elizabeth Lira: “La recuperación de la memoria desde las distintas percepciones de los actores”, in *Círculos de Conversación sobre Derechos Humanos*, Santiago, Fundación Ford, 1999, 7

¹² Ximena Tocornal: *La memoria del régimen militar*, quoted in Lechner and Güell, *op. cit.*, 196. This idea is exposed too by Moulian, Jocelyn-Holt, Barahona de Brito, Lira and Castillo.

collective memory we understand the memory of a national society, which in turn includes all the memories of the different groups or particular societies that compose it¹³. This memory forms based on one or two generations of people who feel they have had a personal experience linked to big processes or historical events of fierce switches or ruptures, that change destiny¹⁴. It consists of the memory these generations have of their own history, and of the lessons they, more or less consciously, extract from that memory. That is why it includes the content of memory (memories of specific historical events) and also the values associated to its evocation (historical lessons), frequently modified by the present vicissitudes¹⁵.

In the case of a society in change or transition, as Chilean society was at the end of the 1980s, “the memory and historic traditions play a fundamental role, be it as positive references (recalling glorious events, or institutions that worked well in the past) that are examples worthy of following, or as negative references (recalling shameful events, ghosts of destruction or institutions that failed spectacularly) that show what must be avoided”¹⁶. This is why, to understand how the 1988 plebiscite was brought about, it is necessary to consider the weight of society’s collective memory of the last two democratic governments, the military coup and the dictatorship that followed it.

Historic memory, on the other hand, is understood as “that part of the past that, due to a certain conjuncture, has the capacity to influence the present, both positively (an example to follow) as negatively (a counterexample, a repulsive situation to avoid). This recalling is possible because there is an analogy, real or imagined, between present and past; on occasions, the important thing isn’t if two historical situations are really alike, but if they are perceived as such by political and social actors”¹⁷. And at the beginning of the transition, there were extensive political and social sectors that felt that the traumatic past of the Unidad Popular and the coup could repeat itself. In this sense, historic memory plays a key role in the creation of the collective memory to be seen in the origins of Chilean transition. Moreover, it is for this influence that memory can have in the transitional processes, that the knowledge of the historic memory of a society is fundamental to understand its institutional design¹⁸. We think that memory has a lot to say in the process of understanding why the political elites and the citizenship acted like they did in the face of the 1988 plebiscite, in the face of the limits established for the transitional process and in the face of the need to tackle, as a society, the traumas generated by the past.

1. THE LONG ROAD TO THE PLEBISCITE

The plebiscite between *Yes* and *No* is one of the many landmarks of the Chilean dictatorship. When we refer to *the long road to the plebiscite* we do not intend to diminish the importance of the events of these years or place them in an inferior position than that of the plebiscite. This expression is used to understand the series of facts, measures, laws and situations that changed the traditional way in which Chileans related to the political, economical and social system throughout their republican history, and explains why an event like the plebiscite of October 5th 1988 was necessary to initiate the restoration of the democracy lost on September 11th 1973.

The coup d’état headed by Augusto Pinochet and set up by the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Police didn’t only put an end to the constitutional government of Salvador Allende, it

¹³ Gerard Namer: “Antifascismo y ‘La memoria de los músicos’ de Halbwachs (1938)”, in Josefina Cuesta Bustillo (ed.), *Memoria e Historia*, Revista Ayer, number 32. Madrid, Marcial Pons Ediciones, 1998, 43.

¹⁴ Steve Stern: “De la memoria suelta a la memoria emblemática: Hacia el recordar y el olvidar como el proceso histórico (Chile 1973-1998)”. www.cholonautas.edu.pe, 2.

¹⁵ Paloma Aguilar, *Memoria y olvido de la Guerra Civil Española*. Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1996, 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁷ Aguilar, *op. cit.*, 35-36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

also put an end to Chilean democracy. From September 11th onwards curfew was imposed for many years, Congress was closed off, the political parties of the UP (Unidad Popular) were proscribed and the others entered recess until they were also proscribed in 1977; the left-wing press disappeared and public administration was purged and placed under direction of military or naval officers, just like the universities¹⁹. Besides, a state of siege was imposed, limiting civil and social rights radically, and it was declared that the country was in a state of war. Now we know that there were no conditions for a civil war, but the military, because of the polarization the country had come to and because of left-wing demagoguery, truly believed that they were at war and that the partisans of the UP were the real enemies they had to eliminate²⁰. They acted with the brutality characteristic of war, and from that day on, repression and fear took over the country. The military government imposed a true state of terror²¹ that in time was perfected and institutionalized in the security services, especially in the DINA, and later in the CNI. These institutions were in charge of the repression of those that opposed the regime, which led to the systematic violations of human rights during the whole dictatorship²².

The new government that initially conceived itself as the “restorer of the democratic system according to the Constitution of 1925” decided a little later to leave that mission aside because it considered the democratic system itself, as imposed by that law, to be the cause of the crisis in the country²³. That is why this government was determined to eliminate democracy from the root through a work of “refoundation, reconstruction and restoration”²⁴. That is to say, it thought that Chilean society had to be changed, a new institutionality had to be built to avoid a new Marxist threat, and that the existing concept of democracy and the role of the State had to be changed. A new Constitution was issued and a profound economical reform took place that radically changed the way in which the role of the State and its relations with society were conceived. From then on there were no timetables, but aims, and the military government established itself as the longest in the history of Chile.

One of the objectives of the refounding politics of the military government was to create a new institutionality to replace the existing one and establish a new type of democracy. For them, the root of all national problems wasn't only in the UP government, but “in the whole of political and institutional preexistent procedures, that had been tools to selfish and demagogical ambitions and that, when time arrived, had been incapable of defending the country of the ‘Marxist threat’”²⁵. The military government rejected the dispositions of the Constitution of 1925 and for this reason it wrote a new constitution in replacement.

The new Constitution contained two parts. The first one consisted of the permanent articles, that is to say, the constitution itself that established an authoritarian democracy, protected and, according to the government, free of the vices of the overthrown democracy²⁶. It imposed a highly presidential government, reduced the functions of congress and limited popular sovereignty through the designation by the president of a third of the Senate. Besides, it prohibited the existence of political parties with a totalitarian ideological basis, understood as Marxism, and established military tutelage over the political institutions.

The second part of the constitution consisted of the transitory articles, which established the legal framework with which Pinochet would govern between 1981 and 1989, and the line of succession once this period was over. The original idea was for Pinochet to govern until 1997, but it

¹⁹ Simon Collier and William Sater: *Historia de Chile 1808-994*. Madrid, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 307.

²⁰ Alan Angell: *De Alessandri a Pinochet*. Santiago, Editorial Andrés Bello, 1993, 94.

²¹ Sofía Correa, Consuelo Figueroa, Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, Claudio Rolle, Manuel Vicuña, *Historia el siglo XX chileno*, Santiago, Editorial Sudamericana, 2001, 281

²² Cristián Gazmuri: *La Persistencia de la Memoria*. Santiago, Ril, 2000, 55-57.

²³ Arturo Valenzuela: “Los militares en el poder: la consolidación del poder unipersonal”, in Paul Drake and Iván Jaksic, *El difícil camino hacia la democracia en Chile 1982-1990*. Santiago, FLACSO, 1993, 19.

²⁴ Correa, *op. cit.*, 284.

²⁵ Valenzuela, *Los militares*, 73.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

was too aberrant to establish that Pinochet would stay 16 more years in power. To solve this situation it was decided to split the presidential period in two. The first stage would last until 1989. One year before, the commanders in chief of the Armed Forces, including Pinochet as commander in chief of the army, would have to choose a single candidate (who could be Pinochet) for ratification in a plebiscite. If the candidate was approved, he would govern until 1997, there would be parliamentary elections and from March 1990 he would govern with the permanent articles of the constitution. If he lost, Pinochet would stay in power until March 1990 and in that period there would be presidential and parliamentary elections and the new president would come to power in March 1990. At the same time, the constitution would come into force.

The new constitution was submitted to approval of the citizenship in a plebiscite in September 1980. This plebiscite left much to be desired in terms of transparency and legitimacy²⁷, but the constitution was approved by 67% of the voters, and the transitory articles came into being in March 11th 1981.

At the end of the 1980s the military regime was at its maximum height. The new constitution was approved, and there was an economical *boom* as a result of the neo liberal reforms to the economic system²⁸. Everything indicated that things would turn out the way the government wanted, that the itinerary would be fulfilled, and the process of refounding and transforming society would come into being without any inconvenience. It looked as if Pinochet would stay in power at least until 1989. However, things started to change in 1982 and from then onwards nothing would be as planned.

During the last months of 1981 there were alarming symptoms that the economic miracle of the end of the 1970s was coming to its end. The international oil crisis put an end to the amazing economic growth in Chile and showed that it had no stable basis. A large amount of the increment in foreign capitals was due to the flux of foreign loans, in fact Chile was one of the countries with the largest per capita foreign debt in Latin America. The system worked because of those credits, and when they were interrupted, it triggered off a crisis. Many banks and companies went bankrupt, unemployment reached 30% and the IBP fell more than 14%. Economists expected the market dynamics to regulate the situation, but the government saw itself forced to intervene, it bought the debt of Chilean banks and of diverse companies, and generated emergency plans to generate more employment²⁹.

Social discontent with the economic crisis, together with the weariness of almost ten years of dictatorship and repression, gave impetus to political parties and trade unions of the opposition³⁰. The opposition's activity led to what was known as *the days of national protest*, during which large social sectors manifested their discontent with the military regime. These protests started in may 1983, with the first national protest organized by the Confederación de Trabajadores del Cobre (Confederation of Workers of Copper), and went on until 1986.

The protests were especially relevant for the political development of Chile during the following years, with two important consequences. In the first place, the opposition resurrected,

²⁷ This plebiscite was announced only a month beforehand, took place under a state of emergency; without an electoral register or electoral court; with the political parties outlawed; and an opposition with no access to any media to manifest why it rejected the constitution. Meanwhile, the government had access to all the newspapers, radios and television channels and traveled throughout the country calling out to vote *Yes* to approve the constitution and the extension of his mandate until 1989; and all this accompanied by a campaign of terror by the government, to awaken the in the citizenship of going back to the UP.

²⁸ The reforms of neoliberalism were implemented as from 1975 and reversed the whole politics of intervention that had been implemented in Chile since the 1930s. The role of the State was considerably reduced; it ceased to be interventionist and protective and became only a subsidiary. To this end, fiscal spending was severely diminished, a series of companies that had been state-run were privatized, and free entrepreneurship and commercial exchange was fomented, following the logic of comparative advantages. This was accompanied by a series of profound reforms, known as "the seven modernizations", one of them the privatization of social security (AFP) and the health system (ISAPRES), and the creation of a new Labour Law (Código del Trabajo) that considerably reduced the power of trade unions.

²⁹ Huneus, Carlos: *El régimen de Pinochet*, Santiago, Editorial Sudamericana, 2000, 506-518.

³⁰ Otano, Rafael: *Crónica de la Transición*. Santiago, Editorial Planeta, 1995, 14.

especially in the political sphere³¹. Until 1983 the political opposition to the regime has been practically invisible. The security services had diminished the socialist, communist and MIR opposition that was working clandestinely and many of their political figures were in exile. Christian democrats were outlawed since 1977. Additionally, the opposition was profoundly divided. Despite the repression and the loss of the democratic system after the coup, the DC and the parties of the UP weren't able to overcome the differences and the polarization that had characterized them during the government of Allende³².

However, the protests and the force with which they awoke social opposition, allowed the political opposition to reappear on the national scene, to reactivate their political activity and reach the consensus they had not achieved in previous years³³. In August 1983, the DC, PR, PS-Núñez and other small groups like Social Democracy, USOPO and the Liberal Party made a pact of the opposition and formed the Alianza Democrática (Democratic Alliance). The more radical opposition, integrated by the PC, PS-Almeyda, MIR and Izquierda Cristiana formed in October of the same year the Movimiento Democrático Popular MDP (Popular Democratic Movement) with a slightly more radical posture than that of the Alianza Democrática. After almost ten years of dictatorship, the opposition managed to reach some level of agreement and adopt a determinate strategy to put an end to the military government. The strategy of "social mobilization" was chosen, with the idea to provoke, through national protest, the destabilization of the regime and a rupture that would allow the restoration of democracy³⁴.

Together with the reappearance of political opposition, a more extremist opposition arose, that proposed popular armed rebellion as a mechanism to derogate the dictatorship. This opposition was composed by the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria MIR (Revolutionary Leftist Movement), reorganized since 1978, and the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez FPMR (Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front), founded at the end of 1983 and linked to the Communist Party. These groups gave a terrorist note to the last years of the dictatorship³⁵.

The second big consequence of the protests was a sense of uncertainty and surprise inside the government, which until then had been unaware of the social discontent it caused. Once the initial uncertainty had passed, the government reacted in two different ways. In the first place, it increased the levels of repression against the protesters, putting thousands of soldiers and secret agents in the streets to pacify the crowds of the opposition. Secondly, the government promoted a political opening to put an end to the protests and diminish the discontent among the opposition. For this, the ex president of the Partido Nacional (National Party), Sergio Onofre Jarpa, was named interior minister. He would have two missions. The first was to generate the opening of certain political spaces. This is why some exiles were allowed to return; censorship of the press was lifted allowing the publication of new weekly magazines; and the election of directives in professional schools and student federations was allowed. This opening, besides opening up another door for the development of politics in society, promoted the reorganization of the political sectors close to the military government, into political parties. The traditional Partido Nacional returned to the public scene and new right-wing organizations were born, like UDI (Unión Demócrata Independiente, Independent Democrat Union) and the Movimiento de Unión Nacional MUN (Movement of National Unity).

Jarpa's second mission was to establish a dialogue with what the regime called the democratic opposition, organized in the Alianza Democrática, with the intercession of cardinal

³¹ Drake, Paul and Iván Jaksic: "Transformación y transición en Chile. 1982-1990", in Drake Paul and Iván Jaksic, *El difícil camino hacia la democracia en Chile 1982-1990*. Santiago, FLACSO, 1993, 38.

³² Angell, *op. cit.*, 111.

³³ For a deeper analysis of the reorganization of opposition and the alliances established in this period, see Otano, *op. cit.*, 14-17.

³⁴ Otano, *op. cit.*, 14.

³⁵ For a deeper analysis of the appearance of these guerrilla and terrorist groups, see Para Huneus, *op. cit.*, 504-505, y Otano, *op. cit.*, 17.

Fresno. However, this dialogue never reached any agreement. On one side, the opposition asked for the renunciation of Pinochet, which was too radical for that moment, and on the other side, Jarpa never had the real power to establish an agreement. The dialogue was only a tactic to calm down the moods and to mislead the opposition³⁶, while Pinochet tried to reestablish all his power and leadership. However, the cardinal did not desist in his attempts at intercession. At the end of 1984, he made another call to dialogue and created a favorable atmosphere for the creation of the Acuerdo Nacional de Transición a la Democracia (National Agreement of Transition to Democracy), which established the conditions for the restoration of democracy. Not only the Alianza Democrática, but also the PN and the MUN adhered to this agreement. However, and despite the amplitude of the agreement, the government ignored it and did not respond to the ecclesiastical call to reach an agreement with the opposition to find a way out of the political crisis.

At the end of 1985, the opposition's strategy of social mobilization was exhausted, just like all the requests of dialogue with the government. However, in the Alianza Democrática it was thought that 1986 was the *decisive year*, and that if Pinochet resisted that year intact, his institutionality would be fully established³⁷, which is why it was necessary to keep trying to destabilize it. However, the PC and FPMR gave the decisive year a more insurrectional character. For them, it was the year in which the dictatorship had to be put to an end through any existing method of struggle, even an armed one³⁸. And in fact, 1986 was the year of the big actions of the FPMR: the entering of arms via the port of Carrizal Bajo and the attempt on Pinochet's life in September of the same year. Both operations failed. The unloading in Carrizal Bajo was discovered and the attack of September left five dead, but none of them was Pinochet. Instead of destabilizing the government and provoking its fall, they only managed to make it even stronger, paving the way for the itinerary planned in the Constitution.

The opposition was loaded with despair; there was nothing more to do than to accept the rules of the game imposed by the government, even if they considered them to be illegitimate³⁹. The mobilization of the masses had not had any effect: the regime had not fallen. The government had managed to overcome the economic, political and social crisis. The neoliberal model was still in application and began its recovery since 1985 thanks to the efforts of the minister of Treasury, Hernán Büchi. The control of the media, the action of the repressive organisms and Pinochet's stubbornness made the regime survive this crisis⁴⁰. But even if the opposition had no other option than to prepare for the presidential succession imposed by the transitory articles of the constitution, the government was wounded. The crisis had opened a gap through which social mobilization was reorganized and the political opposition to the dictatorship reappeared publicly and with force. This caused that the government's plans for the permanence of Pinochet in power until 1997, weren't implemented in the way they intended to.

The Constitution must be implemented right the way it is!

After the failed attempt of the FPMR against Pinochet's life, the government was strengthened more than ever and began 1987 with the clear objective of fulfilling the itinerary established by the constitution, having the plebiscite about the new institutional order and organizing the plebiscite according to the program of the transitory dispositions. All with the eye on extending Pinochet's reign until 1997. The plebiscite had originally been conceived as "un alto *nel mezzo del camini*"⁴¹, a referendum to know the citizen's opinion about the conduction of the country. Its *raison d'être* was to give certain legitimacy to the fact that Pinochet would reign for 24

³⁶ Gazmuri, *op. cit.*, 531.

³⁷ Cavallo, Ascanio: *Los Hombres de la Transición*. Santiago, Editorial Andrés Bello, 1992, 40.

³⁸ Otano, *op. cit.*, 30.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁰ Gazmuri, *op. cit.*, 112.

⁴¹ Cavallo, *op. cit.*, 15.

years in a row. That is why the plebiscite wasn't a whim of the government or the opposition, it was in effect a constitutional disposition all the Armed Forces were committed with and therefore unavoidable⁴².

Preoccupied about this "inquiry" and all the requirements for legitimacy in the transitory articles, the government had been issuing a series of laws since 1985 that were aimed at regulating the conditions of the plebiscite. In July 1985 the "Ley del Tribunal Calificador de Elecciones" (Law of Electoral Court) was issued, an organism with the mission to oversee the legitimacy of the election⁴³. In October 1986 the law of voters' inscriptions and "Servicio Electoral" (voters' service) was issued, opening the electoral registers on February 25th 1987. And in March 1987 the Law of Political Parties was approved, establishing the requisites for the inscription of political parties in the voting register and the legal conditions they had to fulfill to participate in the plebiscite.

However, things had changed. The world wasn't the same anymore; practically all Latin-American nations had restored democracy and Chile was one of the few exceptions of the continent. The international scene was less and less favorable to an anti Marxist dictatorship. The Cold War was coming to an end, so Pinochet's anti Marxist stance and discourse was more and more anachronistic. At the same time, the position of the United States government towards the Pinochet regime had radically changed. The irruption of terrorist groups that combated the dictatorship through armed struggle, and the growing social opposition to the regime, made Washington remove its support of Pinochet's government and support the democratic sectors of the opposition in its struggle to the peaceful and electoral restoration of democracy. It was convinced that that was the safest way to put an end to the influence of terrorist groups and to assure the social, political and economic stability of the country.

Chile wasn't the same in 1987 as in 1980, and there was no longer certainty that Pinochet's government could go on until 1997. Discontent with the government was high and the opposition grew from day to day. While the economic situation had been going upwards since 1985, the effects of the crisis of 1982 were still very noticeable. Many sectors had been affected, from workers to the middle class and entrepreneurs. Unemployment was still high and the salaries very low, so many Chileans were still critical of the economic situation. On the other hand, the social discontent manifested during the days of national protest "showed the magnitude of the opposition to the regime and put in evidence that it could no longer dispense absolutely with the will of an opposition that probably already then consisted of the majority of the citizenship"⁴⁴. The government also caused annoyance with the increment of indiscriminate repression by the military and the security forces during protests. This repression caused a larger amount of Chileans to take conscience of the human rights violations by the regime, and the rejection grew and was openly manifested. Finally, the government's own strategy of opening up played against itself. The opening up allowed society to develop politically. This was used mainly by the parties of the opposition, which managed to establish a strong and ample organizational presence along the country, in universities, in professional schools, etc.⁴⁵. Not only did historical or traditional opposition parties reappear like DC, PS, PR and right-wing parties like PN, but there were also new parties, like the Partido Humanista (Humanist Party) in the opposition and the governmental UDI and MUN. More so, these

⁴² Fernández, Sergio: "El significado del 5 de octubre", in Matías Tagle: *El plebiscito del 5 de octubre de 1988*. Santiago, Corporación Justicia y Democracia, 1995, 38.

⁴³ The government hadn't planned to have the electoral court start its functions during the plebiscite. The Constitution implied that it would only begin its tasks for the first parliamentary elections, after the plebiscite. However, the electoral court considered that the plebiscite would be the first election, and that it should begin its functioning in 1988. Doubtlessly, this altered the government's plans, as it gave the plebiscite the character of election and not a simple inquiry.

⁴⁴ Gazmuri, *op. cit.*, 131.

⁴⁵ Huneus, *Los Chilenos*, 105-106.

two rightist parties fused at the beginning of 1987 and formed a larger party named Renovación Nacional (National Renovation).

Undeniably, the government took the initiative again in 1987 and was imposing its rules, but things weren't as they expected. The growing discontent with the government and the growing organization of the opposition complicated the scene for the president's ambitions. Opposition continued to try to alter the government's itinerary or to at least make it more democratic, through negotiations with the armed forces and the sectors of the political right, among which there was always someone who responded to their call.

The opposition was much weakened in 1987 and the imposition of the government's itinerary forced it to take a position in the plebiscite that was coming up. While they emphatically rejected the 1980 Constitution because it was written only by the government's partisans and because of the way it was approved (leaving a lot to wish for in terms of legality), and for its undemocratic content, they could no longer deny that it existed and that it was in force. So they accepted that the strategy of mass mobilization to derogate the regime was exhausted, and that it was necessary to grow apart from the more radical positions of the MDP and the extreme opposition of terrorist groups. Instead, they looked for a negotiated solution with the Armed Forces inside the framework of the constitution of 1980⁴⁶. The strategy of social mobilization was replaced by that of elections to derogate the regime.

However, many more months would have to pass for the opposition to accept participating in the plebiscite, which was greatly questioned and rejected. The opposition considered that it wasn't the most democratic way to decide who should succeed the president and conduct the country towards the restoration of democracy. As it was an election with only one candidate and not various ones, there would inevitably be a great polarization in the country and the plebiscite would become confrontational, very far from the peace and quiet in which Chileans wanted to live after 15 years of dictatorship and fear⁴⁷. Therefore, they decided to initiate a new struggle against the regime, pursuing the replacement of the plebiscite for free elections. With this idea in mind, a group of personalities of different sectors and currents of opinion, led by the Christian Democrat Sergio Molina, announced the creation of the Comité por las Elecciones Libres (CEL, Committee for Free Elections) in March 1987. A few weeks later, the Alianza Democrática followed their example and formed the Comité Operativo de Partidos para las Elecciones Libres (COPEL, Operative Committee for Free Elections) and the PS-Núñez created the Comité de la Izquierda por las Elecciones Libres (CIEL, Committee of the Left for Free Elections). These three groups supported the idea of a negotiation with the Armed Forces to reform the Constitution and have free elections instead of the plebiscite.

The position favorable to free elections wasn't exclusive of the opposition, it was shared by ample sectors of the Catholic Church and by some political sectors favorable to the government. Among them, there were many members of RN, like Andrés Allamand and Sergio Onofre Jarpa, who considered it was a mistake to have a confrontational plebiscite instead of free elections. The Armed Forces would be seen as defeated if the option of *No* won, and it was more beneficial for the opposition as they would only have to gather around the *No*, without having to present a candidate or a government program to confront the government⁴⁸. These politicians firmly believed that the regime had much more possibilities to win in a free election, where the *No* would have a face and a clear proposition of government⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ José Joaquín Brunner: *Notas para una discusión*, quoted in Moulián, *op. cit.*, 334.

⁴⁷ "Con plebiscito no se logra la Tranquilidad", in *El Mercurio*, Santiago December 5th 1987, C3.

⁴⁸ "Análisis de Allamand suscita diversas reacciones en RN", in *La Época*, Santiago August 9th 1987, 9.

⁴⁹ In April 1988 RN, a party that was formed a year before with the fusion of the MUN and the UDI, broke up. The causes of the division, which was very noisy and full of scandals, were plenty and consisted mainly of struggles for power and leadership inside the party. However, the different positions towards the plebiscite also played a key role. While the sectors close to MUN supported free elections, in the UDI the idea of the plebiscite was preferred, without any type of

However, the government and the Junta weren't pleased with the proposal of free elections. They were committed to the fulfillment of the Constitution and had no disposition to modify its itinerary. The hopes of the opposition were definitely frustrated in July 1987, when Pinochet made changes in his government⁵⁰ and named Sergio Fernández Interior Minister. This had a clear meaning: "the marathon of the plebiscite had started"⁵¹. No one could forget that it was Sergio Fernández who had organized and won the plebiscite of 1980 for the approval of the Constitution, and it wasn't far-fetched to imagine that his nomination was an attempt to repeat what had happened 7 years before.

After the failure to avoid the plebiscite, the opposition had no other option than to accept it, and to accept the institutions imposed by the dictatorship as well. The only ones who decided to remain aside were the PC and the MIR. The rest of the parties of the opposition called the citizenship to register in the voters registers, not as a way to recognize and accept the regime and its laws, but as a democratic and peaceful way to put an end to the dictatorship⁵². They inscribed the political parties in the electoral registers to take advantage of the official character it gave them. The Partido Humanista and Democracia Cristiana were inscribed first. They were followed by the Partido Radical and the socialists, who next to other leftist groups and some independents decided to form the Partido Por la Democracia (PPD, Party For Democracy). The sole aim of this party was to participate in the plebiscite.

Finally, the official call to participate in the plebiscite came on February 2nd 1988, when the opposition, after years of divisions and problems to reach consensus and unite against the dictatorship, formed an ample alliance committed to the option of *No* in the plebiscite. The Concertación de los Partidos Políticos por el *No* (Pact of Political Parties for *No*) was formed by more than ten groups (Democracia Cristiana, PS-Almeyda, PS-Núñez, Partido Radical, Partido Radical- Luengo, Izquierda Cristiana, Mapu, Socialdemocracia, Usopo, Unión Liberal Republicana, Padena, Partido Humanista and Mapu OC) and called Chileans to vote *No* in the plebiscite to derogate Pinochet and his regime, and to finally obtain the free and competitive elections they had struggled so hard for⁵³.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party and the MIR decided not to respond to the call of the Concertación, and during half a year they emphatically opposed participating in the plebiscite. However, at last they chose to yield and to participate in the plebiscite calling to vote *No*, but they did not integrate the large alliance of the opposition and gave their *No* a more radical meaning. For them, the *No*, besides being a No to Pinochet and its regime, was a *No* to his political and economic system, and they demanded that once the plebiscite was won, a provisional government be installed and a constitutional assembly that would elaborate a new Constitution⁵⁴.

So, while the opposition associated in the Concertación had decided to participate in the plebiscite, this election has lost all its original intentions. The opposition had given it a confrontational character and presented it as defiance to the whole system. It was no longer about confirming or not confirming Pinochet, who had been named candidate of the government. The *No* was against the institutionality he had established during the 15 years of dictatorship. Soon, the government had to leave aside this meaning of inquiry the plebiscite originally was meant to be, and join the confrontational character. The Constitution of 1980 had become a boomerang for the authoritarian regime and for Pinochet⁵⁵. It had become a true obstacle, since it established a fatal

modification to the established itinerary. For a deeper analysis of the division, see Andrés Allamand, *La travesía del desierto*, Santiago, Aguilar, 1999, and Otano, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ Cavallo, Ascanio, Manuel Salazar y Óscar Sepúlveda, *La Historia Oculta del Régimen Militar*, Santiago, Antártica, 1990, 550.

⁵¹ Otano, *op. cit.*, 41.

⁵² Genaro Arriagada: *Por la razón o la fuerza. Chile bajo Pinochet*. Santiago, Sudamericana, 1998, 332.

⁵³ "Trece partidos llaman a votar "No" en el plebiscito", in *La Época*, Santiago February 3rd 1988, 10.

⁵⁴ "PC llamó a votar No y a desconocer el triunfo del SÍ", in *El Mercurio*, Santiago June 16 1988, A 1; "Voceros miristas llamaron a votar No en el plebiscito", in *La Época*, Santiago August 20, 1988 11.

⁵⁵ Huneeus, *Los chilenos*, 101.

deadline for his permanence in power. The date of the plebiscite was getting close very fast and it imposed an uncompetitive election that had to have a minimum of seriousness to be considered legitimate and not just a manipulation of the regime that would signify a breakup of its own institutionality⁵⁶.

More and more, the plebiscite ceased to be a mere inquiry in which the ratification of Pinochet was practically assured, and became a challenge to all his regime, an opportunity for the opposition to undermine its foundations and put an end to his government⁵⁷. The opposition knew how to take advantage of this opportunity and used it as a first step towards the restoration of democracy.

2. THE WEIGHT OF MEMORY IN THE PLEBISCITE OF 1988

The plebiscite of 1988 was the road chosen to define Chile's future. After 15 years of dictatorship, Chileans had to decide in an election if they would continue 8 more years under the government of general Pinochet, now as a civilian, or if democracy would be restored through free elections of President and Congress.

Undeniably, this was an untraditional election: it was a plebiscite with the connotation of presidential election, but with only one candidate who had to be decided on through the options *Yes* or *No* if he would or would not remain in power. However, be as it may, it was an election in which the people had to manifest their choice about the political future of the country, and as in every election, the options at stake had to convince the Chileans that their alternative was better for this future. During all of 1988 there was a confrontation between the government -partisans of the *Yes* option, that is to say, the permanence of Pinochet in power until 1997; and on the other hand, the opposition, partisans of the *No* option, the end of the dictatorship and the institutionality imposed during the military regime. They both used all their means of publicity and propaganda so as to obtain victory in the plebiscite.

This investigation intends to analyze, through the content of campaigns and political discourses, the influence memory had in the plebiscite of 1988 and its results. The campaigns of the government and the opposition, since they tried to "sell" a certain option to the citizenship, both reflected, in different degrees, the characteristics of the Chilean society of those years. Not only those of the political class, but also those of ordinary people, to whom the campaigns were aimed to obtain votes and the adherence to their option. From different perspectives, both options constructed their campaigns according to the interests, motivations and needs of Chilean society, and that situation is to be seen in the way the structure of the campaign was organized, and in the contents, messages and images they transmitted.

Inside this logic, the campaigns of *Yes* and *No* were constructed under influence of the memory and the fear existing in society. Pinochet's government used them to identify the restoration of democracy with chaos, disorder and instability. Meanwhile, the opposition used them to conclude that it should act as far away as possible from the confrontational way they had behaved during the government of the Unidad Popular and the dictatorship, and to project an image of unity and consensus that would make Chileans believe that it was possible to triumph in plebiscite and to restore democracy. In both campaigns there are appeals to the past and future, both appeal to collective memory, but to different historic memories. This is what we will analyze.

2.1 The "Yes" campaign

During the campaign of the plebiscite, the government appealed to a historic memory marked by the chaos of the Unidad Popular, by the irresponsibility and demagogies of politicians

⁵⁶ Cavallo, *La Historia*, 551.

⁵⁷ Cavallo, *Los Hombres*, 16.

and by a failed democratic system that had led Chile towards the Marxist abyss, from which it had been saved by the Armed Forces with their military “pronouncement” of September 11th 1973. This memory was extremely powerful considering that the government had repeated it to its citizens for more than 15 years⁵⁸ through all the means it had to its disposition: discourses, radio, press, posters and television. Moreover, the whole military government had been constructed over this founding idea that it was Chile’s salvation from the claws of Marxism, and the origin of the whole process of “reconstruction” and modernization by the regime.

The objective of using this memory and constantly evoking the past was to avoid that the citizenship forget the true dimension of the tasks performed by the military government, especially the harm they had saved the country from, and the way they had made it move forwards. The government wanted to awaken the Chileans fears of going back to the past of the Unidad Popular. It described these years as the worst in the history of Chile, emphasizing only the more negative aspects, as if that was the only thing that existed during that government (violence, lack of provisions and queues, expropriations of companies and agricultural lands). The government also condemned the whole democratic system constructed by the Constitution of 1925, for allowing the arrival to power of Marxism, and discredited politicians for giving over to demagogies and sectaries, and not stopping the totalitarian threat in time⁵⁹. The idea of this speech was for Chileans to identify the democracy offered by the opposition with the catastrophic democracy of the Unidad Popular, and to spread the fear that the victory of *No* would lead to such an unfortunate condition as the one that, according to the government, existed during the government of Salvador Allende. The regime wanted to exploit this fear in its favor, trying to convince Chileans that the best way to restore democracy and development was to “extend” the tasks of the government for another 8 more years.

However, this memory was pretty slanted, as all the violence after the coup d’état, the repression and human rights violations were left out, censored or distorted, and even forgotten, as if they had never existed⁶⁰. The “pronouncement” and the military regime were only presented as a salvation from Marxism and as the modernizers that should extend their work in the future, and all negative aspects were omitted.

This historic memory constructed by the military regime was very present in the *Yes* campaign, from the way it was organized, to the message it transmitted. The government campaign was a true campaign of the State, led by the Interior minister, Sergio Fernández, and its promoters were the members of the cabinet, provincial governors, majors and civil servants, and even some Army officers. The political parties that supported this option, like Renovación Nacional, UDI and Avanzada Nacional played only a secondary role in the direction and development of the campaign.

In this organization we can see a clear appeal to historic memory. The government put the campaign in the hands of its employees and not in that of civil groups, especially not in that of political parties. For the government, the plebiscite was a key event: the continuation of the regime’s work was at stake, and that is why it had to concentrate on defending it. It was considered that it was more adequate to center the organization of the campaign on the structure of the Interior Ministry. In this sense it is very clarifying to look at the opinion of the then interior minister Sergio Fernández, who declared that such an important task could not be entrusted to the “failed” politicians of the right with whom general Pinochet would never identify himself⁶¹. With these statements there was an appeal to the historic memory in the sense that the politicians and their demagogies had been the ones responsible for the crisis in Chile. The government considered the politicians of the right guilty of their own defeat in the 1970 elections. They were thought to have been incapable of avoiding the victory of a Marxist president. With his words, Fernández showed that the government wasn’t willing to leave such an important task in the hands of the politicians

⁵⁸ “Como derrotar la apatía”, in *La Época* (Suplemento Dominical), Santiago December 13 1987, 15.

⁵⁹ Giselle Munizaga: *El discurso público de Pinochet*. Santiago, CESOC/CENECA, 1988, 70.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Lira e Isabel Castillo, *Psicología de la amenaza política y el miedo*, Santiago, ILAS, 1991, 192

⁶¹ Sergio Fernández, quoted in “Globos Sonda”, *Qué Pasa* (Santiago) N° 892 (12-18.5.1988), 9.

that had already failed in the past. Securing the continuance of the regime was at stake, and the recipe of the campaign of the State had already successfully been tried in the plebiscite of 1980, when the new Constitution had been approved with more than 60% of the votes.

In practical terms, the *Yes* campaign was constructed on the basis of two elements. On one side, there was a more economical orientation that intended to emphasize the tasks of reconstruction and modernization of the country developed by the military regime. The idea was to create the feeling that Chile was a richer a more developed country thanks to the military, and exploit the idea that it was necessary to continue this work to transform Chile in a truly democratic and developed country. The other element of the campaign was terror. The victory of *No* would lead the country back to the chaotic and Marxist past of the UP, from which the Armed Forces had rescued it in 1973, implying, at the same time, that all institutions constructed by the military and the impressive economical modernization would come to an end. With these two messages, the campaign intended to obtain votes through a sense of gratitude for the achievements and of fear of the past. There was no speech, poster or publicity in which one or all of these elements didn't appear.

The message of continuation was based on a constant mention of the effectiveness of the modernizing and restructuring measures put in practice by the government. It argued that the Armed Forces had put Chile at the doorstep of economic development and given it a new institutionality that would allow for initiating a future in democracy, without falling in the threat of Marxism, as had happened in 1970. In this train of thought there was a clear vision of the future, with which the government tried to convince the citizenship that *Yes* was "the most clear and transparent road to democracy, freedom, and stable and secure participation"⁶², towards a future in which things would be different from the present. The whole institutionality created by the military regime would come into being and the president would govern as a civil and with a democratically elected Congress.

Historic memory was present in this scheme. The idea that *Yes* would allow to put into practice the commitment the Armed Forces took on in 1973, is related to legitimating the "pronouncement". This is presented in a blurred, indirect way, but is still present. Inevitably, when they talked about this salvation, they also alluded to that from which they saved the country: the chaos of the UP.

In that sense the most emblematic campaign was that of *There are millions of us*, that intended to show the accomplishments of the 15 years of government, presenting it "as the constructor of the great results in the betterment of the quality of life, economic and social progress"⁶³, measures that, like the slogan claimed, had benefited millions of Chileans.

Both the television spots and the posters touched diverse subjects like exports, agriculture, copper production, infant mortality, alcoholism, etc., looking, on one hand, to emphasize the modernity attained by the government. There were abundant images of "modern machinery, tow trucks, bulldozers, and electric saws; workers with masks, helmets, gloves and industrial shoes, in conditions of total security"⁶⁴. On the other hand, despite the economical tone, they appealed to historic memory, emphasizing all these accomplishments in comparison with the deplorable state the same situations were in at the end of the government of Frei and the beginning of the Unidad Popular. All topics were compared to how things were like in 1970 according to the government. For example, in one of the numerous TV spots, it was stated that according to data from the Ministry of Public Works in 1970 only 66% of urban population had running water, while in 1988 97% did⁶⁵. All these spots showed a confrontational vision of history, "they were organized in an axis then-now, in which all the past was associated with evil"⁶⁶, while the present showed how good everything was. The present wasn't enough. It could only be valued in comparison to the past.

⁶² Munizaga, *op. cit.*, 134.

⁶³ "La estrategia publicitaria de Pinochet", in *La Época*, Santiago March 13 1988, 7.

⁶⁴ "La magia de la televisión", *Apsi* (Santiago), N° 245 (28.3 – 3.4.1988), 15.

⁶⁵ Afiche "Somos Millones", *Qué Pasa* (Santiago), N° 882 (3-9.3.1988), .47.

⁶⁶ María Eugenia Hirmas, quoted in "La magia de la televisión", *Apsi* (Santiago), N° 245 (28.3- 3.4.1988) 14.

Perhaps this double appeal reflected the reality of the country. It was no secret that many social sectors didn't feel part of this modern, prosperous and happy Chile that appeared on the screen, because they lived in another Chile, that poor and marginal place that didn't appear on television⁶⁷. Undeniably, in many areas Chilean economy had been modernized in an important manner, giving the country more stability. However, these benefits weren't shared by all and *There are millions of us* wanted the sectors marginalized from economic success to know what these achievements were about. One could even say that this appeal to historic memory intended to make people recall the chaotic economy during the Unidad Popular so they would value the situation of 1988 and give their vote to the government, even if they had not benefited from this new prosperous economy.

In this campaign there was also the idea that the victory of *Yes* didn't mean that the political system would continue in the way it had been until then. On the contrary, it would lead to the complete application of the institutionality of the 1980 Constitution, with the establishment of a new democratic system. Historic memory was present there too. This new democratic government wouldn't only be different from the military government, it would also be very different from the old Chilean democracy, the one full of vices that existed until 1973 and that, according to the government, had been completely overwhelmed by the Marxist threat⁶⁸. As from 1989 "true democracy" would be born, the one that would guarantee that the past wouldn't repeat itself and that there wouldn't be another Marxist threat like that of Unidad Popular.

The other axis of this campaign was that of terror. The option of *No* was identified with chaos and the return to the Unidad Popular, with the end of economic stability, with Marxism and its terrorist facet. Besides, it disqualified the politicians of the opposition, annulled any viable proposition they made for the future, appealing to their irresponsible actions of the past, to their guilt in the breakup of democracy and even their ambiguity and lack of efficiency in the fight against the Pinochet regime.

As the minister of planning (ODEPLAN) Sergio Melnick stated, the government clearly knew that Chileans wanted visions of the future and not of the past, that they no longer wanted a life marked by fear, that they wanted changes, but in an orderly manner and with tranquility⁶⁹. For this reason, the government tried by all means to identify the opposition with the past, creating the dichotomy *Yes* is future, *No* is past.

This campaign of terror moved in diverse dimensions. The first was Pinochet's speech, that presented the plebiscite as the options *Me or chaos*. With this reasoning, the president wanted to generate the feeling that if the continuation of the regime wasn't approved, all the institutions and modernizations done until then by the government, would be destroyed by the opposition, the same opposition that had destroyed democracy in the past. This appeal to terror had in itself an appeal to historic memory. The government stated that 1988 was like 1970, and that the decision taken in the plebiscite would be transcendental. It would be decided if the country went forwards or would go back to the chaos of Unidad Popular, imposed by the opposition if they came to power. This is how Pinochet presented it:

We must renew the mystique of September 11th inside of us, when everything was possible because Chile needed us (...). Today Chile needs us again. The country needs its children to think about the future and not to commit the same mistakes of the past⁷⁰.

President Pinochet called out for the people to remember the past, but the past according to the historic memory of the government. For the government, the past ended in 1973 and was filled

⁶⁷ "¿Qué Pasó?, *Qué Pasa* (Santiago), N° 914 (13-20.10.1988), 15.

⁶⁸ "La opción es terminar o no la tarea inconclusa", in *El Mercurio*, Santiago August 24 1987, A1-10.

⁶⁹ "Melnick: oposición está desarticulada", in *El Mercurio*, Santiago, November 21 1987, C2.

⁷⁰ "La tarea está inconclusa", in *La Época*, Santiago, August 24 1988, 8.

only with chaos and violence; repression and human rights violations had no space in this memory. He tried to exploit that side of collective memory that considered the military “pronouncement” to be an act of salvation of the Marxist catastrophe that reigned in Chile in 1973. He appealed once more to his legitimacy, which was unfounded if there was no fear of going back to the chaos of the Unidad Popular.

As for the opposition, Pinochet presented it too under the prism of historic memory. For him, they were the same enemies of yesterday, those who had destroyed democracy and who only wanted to repeat the same policies that had opened the doors to Marxism in the past, putting not only the achievements of the government, but the future and freedom of the country at stake. He blamed them for wanting to destroy everything that had been done in those 15 years, distorting the truth, accusing him of being a dictator and antidemocratic (while the “military pronouncement” was done to save democracy!⁷¹). Besides, he accused them of selling out their homeland, when they went abroad to tell lies about the country to obtain money to go back to the past and apply their wasted policies⁷².

Opposition has given us a chaotic country and it is destined to do the same again. All the politicians and pseudo politicians that now march united towards the *No*, haven’t offered any alternative different to the one when they led our fatherland to the greatest political, moral, economic and social disaster in its history. There are sectors who want to relive the old and obsolete political schemes, which will have dreadful results, but which are presented amongst lies so as to confuse the Chileans of good faith⁷³.

There was also a questioning of the interpretation the political parties made about the meaning of a *No* victory. The fact that they proposed a modification in the itinerary and asked the Armed Forces for a negotiation to modify the Constitution, was a leap into the void for the government, an attempt to negate and dismantle the established institutions, putting the survival of the nation at risk. Pinochet, the militaries and some of the politicians most loyal to the regime, like Jaime Guzmán and Sergio Onofre Jarpa, stated that any negation of the institutions would lead the country to a situation similar to that of 1973, and that the Armed Forces should act in the same way as they had done then, as they could not allow Chile to fall into that same abyss again⁷⁴.

The idea behind these declarations was for the *No* defended by opposition to not only generate fear of going back to the chaos of the Unidad Popular, but also to awake the fear of a new military intervention with the same characteristics and violence of the “pronouncement” of 1973. The government took advantage of the fact that this trauma was still very much alive in society⁷⁵. Not only did it want to produce fear in those that had opposed the Unidad Popular and supported the military coup, but also in those that supported the previous government or simply opposed the military intervention and Pinochet’s government, and even in those that had been victims of the State violence during those 15 years. They wanted those sectors to appeal to their historic memory, marked mainly by the shock that the coup d’état had brought to their lives.

The second level of this terror campaign was aimed at exploiting the idea that Chile was threatened by a possible escalation of violence and subversion organized by Marxist terrorism. According to the government, this was financed by soviet imperialism with the clear aim to destabilize the country, avoid the fulfillment of the Constitution and impose a Marxist

⁷¹ “Primer acto de masas en la campaña oficial”, in *La Época*, Santiago, September 4 1988, 8.

⁷² Munizaga, *op. cit.*, 138-139. These criticisms of selling out their homeland were based on the economic aid the Chilean opposition received from several democratic countries, especially from the U.S.A., for their plebiscitary campaign.

⁷³ “Pinochet: ‘Claro que el plebiscito es un fraude, pero de los señores politicastos’”. In *La Época*, Santiago, April 13 1988, 8.

⁷⁴ “El chantaje del golpe”, *Apsi* (Santiago), N° 254 (30.5-6.6.1988), 5.

⁷⁵ “Perfil del consumidor político”, *Apsi* (Santiago), N° 236 (25-31.1.1988), 9.

totalitarianism⁷⁶, turning Chile in a new Nicaragua, or, definitively, in a new Cuba. Pinochet even declared that Chile was in a war to death between the democrats and totalitarian Marxists⁷⁷. And of course, in this plan, the Communist Party (PC) had a key role. For the government, this party was the political representative of soviet Marxism in Chile, and was responsible for all the acts of terrorism in the country.

These warnings had a political correlation intended to identify all opposition with the possibility that communism would come to power and the logic of terrorism would impose itself if the *No* option won. Since the opposition united in the Concertación, the government tried to make it appear as if it was dominated by the PC, even when this party was never part of that coalition. The members of government, like the sub secretary of Interior, Alberto Cardemil, argued that the PC didn't integrate the Concertación to fool the citizenship with a façade of moderation, but that once opposition triumphed, the communists and their violent strategies would rule⁷⁸.

Finally, the third dimension of the campaign of terror had been meticulously organized by the regime and intended to exploit fear through historic memory, particularly the most negative memories of the Unidad Popular. It stated that the victory of *No* would mean going back to the chaos of that time.

The speech at this stage of the campaign was “we go on or we go back to the past”, that is to say, if *Yes* didn't win, the country would go back to September 10th 1973 and everything would start again⁷⁹. This disjunctive was open to many interpretations and was meant to increment fear not only in the UP's opposition, but also in the government's opposition: on one side, it could mean going back to the same lack of provisions and violence of the Unidad Popular; but on the other side, it could mean that if *No* won and the military interpreted it as a new September 10th 1973, the victory of the opposition could lead to a new military intervention.

While this speech was expressed with different levels of intensity since 1987, it was strongest in the first days of August 1988. The press, radio and television aligned themselves with the government to exploit the idea that the triumph of *No* would lead to the chaos of the Unidad Popular. There was special emphasis on recalling the months prior to the military coup⁸⁰: the profound crisis and social and political divisions in the country; the high levels of inflation and lack of provisions, extremist violence and the calls to form “the power of the people”, etc. Among the spots shown on television and in the press, the ones with the motto *Yes, you choose and choose Yes* are noticeable, centered mainly on economic and social issues, with a direct appeal for the public to recall how they were living in 1973: lack of provisions, inflation, housing, education, etc. An example of the posters of this campaign was one about the lack of provisions, and showed two pictures of a housewife named Julia. In the first one she looked famished and her shopping trolley was completely empty. In the other, she looked happy, with a large smile and the trolley full of food. The accompanying text read:

Julia's bad memory can make her suffer hunger.
1973: Lack of provisions and queues
1988: Plenty of supplies and comfort
Bad memory can make many Chilean women go through poverty,
shortage and discomfort again.
Because 15 years ago queues were endless. For bread. For milk. For sugar.
Only the few privileged by the arrogance and arbitrariness
of the JAP were free of that torment.

⁷⁶ Munizaga, *op. cit.*, 139.

⁷⁷ “Según Pinochet el programa opositor es un ‘caos a cuatro años plazo’”, in *La Época*, Santiago, February 5 1988, 9.

⁷⁸ “Concertación por el No es un puente para el PC”, in *El Mercurio*, Santiago February 7 1988, C3, and “Cardemil habló de un plan de dos fases de la oposición”, in *La Época*, Santiago February 25 1988, 3.

⁷⁹ “Volver atrás o avanzar”, *Qué Pasa* (Santiago), N° 254 (30.5-5.6.1988), 7

⁸⁰ “La DC pidió explicación al gobierno por el inicio de la campaña del terror”, in *La Época*, Santiago August 2 1988, 9.

In the upcoming plebiscite you may have to queue up again to vote.
When you are standing there, think and recall.
In your hands is the chance for this to be the last time
you stand in a queue until the next election.
Choose Yes!!!⁸¹

These spots were accompanied by a publicity campaign that wanted to remember Chileans how the last days of the Unidad Popular had been. Two means were used for this. In the first place, a daily bulletin of four pages was published, composed only of reports of what was going on in the country 15 years before, copied from the main newspapers of that time (*El Mercurio, La Tercera, El Clarín, Puro Chile*, among others). The bulletin was called *Ayer y Hoy (Yesterday and Today)* and had the slogan *A people that doesn't know its history, repeats the errors of the past.*

The second resource used in this kind of publicity was to have insertions in the main newspapers favorable to the regime (*El Mercurio, La Tercera, La Segunda* and *Las Últimas Noticias*). Between August first and September 11th, these insertions were called *Only 15 years ago* and were a reduced version of the bulletin, with the main headlines that were published that same day 15 years before. After September 11th, as the government of the Unidad Popular had come to its end and there were no more “interesting” headlines for publication, a new type of insertion began called *Memories from 15 years ago*, consisting of accounts by people who told how terrible the UP government had been. Most of these accounts were based on the lack of provisions, the queues, the violence and expropriations. All these ended with the message: *You choose. Let's go forward or go back to the UP.*

2.2 The “No” campaign

Just like the *Yes* campaign, the *No* campaign was organized under influence of the traumatized collective memory of the last convulsed twenty years of Chilean history, and of the fear that reigned among Chileans. In fact, historic memory played a key role in the way the opposition organized itself and its campaign. However, this historic memory was different from the one constructed by the government. The past the opposition talked about, the aspects it highlighted, weren't the same from the ones in the government speech. The opposition appealed to two types of past; one far away, the democratic past that had existed in Chile until September 11th 1973, but with an emphasis on its democratic tradition and all the achievements of those years that had led to the development of the country. The Unidad Popular was avoided, only mentioned in response to the attacks of the government, and it was repeatedly said that this was a stage that had been overcome and from which they had learned, and that it was impossible to repeat. It wasn't convenient to remember that part of the past⁸². After all, the experience of the Unidad Popular, the divisions inside the opposition, and the responsibilities of each one in the breakup of democracy, was a “stone in their shoe” that could be a threat to the consensus obtained after so many years of failed attempts at uniting the dissidence.

The other past they emphasized and that predominated in their speech, was closer and even confused with the present. It had to do with the years of dictatorship, with all the violence, repression, poverty and marginalization that characterized them. In this case, emphasis was placed upon criticizing the logic of war and the division between friends and relatives imposed by the dictatorship. They also refuted the idea that the economic successes the government bragged about were as wonderful as they said.

Unlike the official campaign, the *No* campaign was directed by all the political parties of the conglomerate Concertación de Partidos por el No, and despite the heterogeneity that

⁸¹ Poster, *Qué Pasa* (Santiago), N° 912 (22-28.9.1988), 51.

⁸² Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt: *El Chile perplejo*, Santiago, Planeta/Ariel, 1998, 205.

characterized them, they managed to have a united campaign organized under one direction. This organization responded to the weight of memory that existed in the opposition. They founded their unity on an effort to overcome the divisions, confrontations and ambiguity that had characterized them during the Unidad Popular and the dictatorship, and proposed a vision of the future in which Chile would reconnect with its democratic tradition, leaving the chaotic past of the dictatorship behind. With a language full of optimism, joy, hope and reconciliation, opposition tried to lift the Chileans out of the fear the military regime had immersed them in, and offer a country for all, without enemies. Unlike the government, the opposition did not want to take advantage of fear, but to combat it and put an end to it, since it was the first obstacle to have the social opposition become an electoral and political opposition. This campaign concentrated on showing that the origin of this fear lied in the military regime itself, and that was why it had to be told *No* to move on and build a truly democratic future for all.

Besides, it was a campaign based on personal contact with people, it was a massive campaign, made by and for the people. The houses of *No* proliferated throughout the country, and originated one of the biggest political electoral movements in the history of Chile.

There was also a modern side to the campaign, with the active participation of technical experts in public opinion, writers of social circumstances, communicators, publicists, artists and journalists, who worked in coordination with the politicians. These professionals gave a series of courses of action for this campaign that tried to bring the politicians closer to the practical problems of the population and as far away as possible from ideologies and headstrongness. Besides, a diagnosis was made about what Chilean society was like and what it wanted. This enabled them to get to know his society and its historic memory on a more profound level. The diagnosis⁸³ stated that Chilean society had gone through a profound process of disintegration, was worn down with the radical manner in which changes had been pursued in the country⁸⁴. Also, the long duration of the regime and the weakening of social cohesion had led to the rise of fear and anguish caused by the impossibility to exert some control. These feelings brought along a sense of humiliation by a power that excluded the population from political participation; impotence, with the figure of Pinochet as omnipotent; and skepticism, paired with the idea that there was nothing to do to make things different. The failure of all the opposition's attempts to derogate the regime and the lack of unity and agreement up until then had made people loose faith in their proposals and believe that everything would end up in a new failure. However, the diagnosis wasn't completely negative. There was fear, but Chileans wanted changes too and that was precisely what the opposition had to exploit.

The opposition's speech, therefore, had to consider that the desired changes had to be carried out in an orderly and secure way⁸⁵, and aimed, mainly, at bettering practical life conditions. The fear that existed in society, which was largely a result of the repression exerted by the government, caused that the issue of human rights wasn't a priority for a large sector of the populations⁸⁶. Doubtlessly, this was a problem for the opposition, because it could not leave this topic aside. It was a key factor inside the historic memory about the dictatorship they were trying to exploit. As a solution, both the strategy and the speech of this campaign were focused on assuring the voters that the *No* option was a valid way to restore democracy in a peaceful way, and the true road to a democratic future, in peace and for all, where not vengeance but reconciliation would have priority. On the other hand, the campaign was centered on the people's daily demands, denouncing the injustices and inequalities they faced up to from day to day, especially in the social and economic sphere. The issue of human rights was left on a secondary level, but it was not absent.

⁸³ Eugenio Tironi: "Un rito de integración", in *La Campaña del No vista por sus creadores*, Santiago, Melquiades, 1989, 11-12.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁵ Encuesta CED, in "Los chilenos desean cambios solo con orden y paz social", in *El Mercurio*, Santiago, January 26 1988, C2.

⁸⁶ *Idem.*

From this point of view, the *No* campaign didn't intend to modify the opinions of the citizenship, as these were largely already favorable to the *No* option. This campaign tried to overcome "that attitude of resignation born of fear and skepticism, so people would act according to their opinions"⁸⁷, and could freely and without fear manifest their option of democracy and the end of dictatorship.

The strategy of the opposition was designed on three fundamental axes to defeat fear and spread this new triumphant speech to the rest of society. In the first place, it intended to prove that the unity of all the opposition, from left to right, was possible and could offer a viable government option. Secondly, it intended to give the confidence that the plebiscite would be a clean process, that there would be no fraud nor that the government would deny the opposition's triumph. And thirdly, the message was one of joy, hope and reconciliation and showed that the triumph of *No* could offer a future for all in peace and security; that it didn't mean a return to a past from which the lessons had been learned and had already been overcome.

In all these axes, historic memory played a key role, be it explicitly or implicitly. In one way or another, as a lesson, as a trauma or an example to follow, the elements of the past that the opposition emphasized marked the way in which it faced the plebiscitary process. This is what we will analyze in the following pages.

The first axis of the opposition's campaign was aimed at overcoming the divisions that had characterized the opposition since the government of the Unidad Popular. They wanted to achieve unity against the regime and show the citizenship that they were a viable option of government. The politicians that fought for the *No* in the plebiscite had an important historic load in themselves. They were the same politicians from 1973; the same who were part of the governments of Frei and Allende and who had dreamed about the revolution and a more democratic Chile. They were the ones to see their dreams destroyed with a single "blow" on September 11th. Their memory, just like that of the larger part of the country, was traumatic: from feeling that they had the possibility to change the world, they went on to the disintegration of this world and its ideals, and to the frustration of not being able to fulfill the historical task they felt themselves responsible for. Many of them had been victims of repression and exile. Their experience of the dictatorship had made it clear to them that it was necessary to overcome the past and that they had to learn from their mistakes. While looking for unity and a new strategy to derogate the government, they could not forget the tragic result the lack of consensus had had in 1973⁸⁸ and the successive failures they had had in their struggle against the dictatorship. The aim of the new unity was the victory of *No* in the plebiscite, so as to open up the road towards free elections and negotiations with the Armed Forces, for a fast, peaceful and agreed upon transition towards true democracy.

For them, historic memory played a key role. The loss of democracy had made them question their actions during the two last democratic governments, to weigh their radical and sectarian attitudes and to "extraordinarily value a political action with tolerance, justice, sense of proportion and measure and a profound respect for the feelings and aspirations of the people"⁸⁹. They became more moderate, more interested in the aspects that helped to reach a consensus, than in ideological schemes and sectarianisms. They understood that they should use historic memory to learn from the past, to avoid committing the same mistakes and to understand that the divisions of the past and their ideological differences were insignificant in comparison to their shared experience of the dictatorship.

This led the parties of the opposition to form the Concertación de Partidos por el No, a wide coalition with the main purpose of winning the plebiscite, to derogate Pinochet and his itinerary, look for a negotiation to reform the Constitution and assure the restoration of true democracy.

⁸⁷ Eugenio Tironi: *La Invisible Victoria*, Santiago, Sur, 1990, 47.

⁸⁸ "Punto de consenso: Unidad opositora en necesaria para encarar el plebiscito", in *La Época*, Santiago January 17 1988, 9.

⁸⁹ Genaro Arriagada: "Prólogo", in *La Campaña del No vista por sus creadores*. Santiago, Melquíades, 1989, XV.

To fundament this unity, the opposition limited itself to say that the democrats had decided to overcome their differences of the past letting history judge the responsibilities of each one in the crisis that led to the breakup of democracy. They preferred to get positive things out of those experiences, to build a better future and materialize their unity⁹⁰. This new coalition represented their hope to do things right and recover the democracy they had lost in 1973.

There were a series of proposals in which a moderate and conciliatory tone prevailed. In the campaign of the opposition there was special attention on those aspects that interested society, like economic betterment and a peaceful restoration of democracy, but without great transformations, like altering the basic fundamentals of the economic system or the denial of the Constitution of 1980. On the other hand, there was special care in assuring that the triumph of *No* wouldn't lead to a restoration of the State politics that had characterized the last two democratic governments. This was in response to the campaign of terror developed by the government. However, they warned that things wouldn't go on in the same way, since with the restoration of democracy it would be necessary to make the economic benefits more just. These benefits would reach the larger part of society, not only a minority as it had until then⁹¹.

The second axis of the *No* campaign was directed at overcoming the fear existing in society, especially in relation to the transparency of the plebiscite and of the possibility of a new coup d'état and the repression this would generate. One of the objectives was to defeat skepticism and fear in society, with a message intended to support the belief that the inscription in the voters' registers and voting *No* was the way to defeat the dictatorship. This message tried to convince the public that votes would be secret and that the opposition would do everything in its means to assure the transparency of the election and avoid a fraud like the one of the plebiscite of 1980. These fears weren't unfounded. Chileans still recalled the plebiscite of 1980 with all its irregularities⁹². The opposition knew that they had the support of the larger part of the citizenship, but they also knew that this wasn't enough, and that to obtain an effective victory of the *No* they had to take all the possible measures to avoid any kind of fraud.

Undeniably, the conditions surrounding the new plebiscite would be very different from that of 1980. There were electoral registers now, the process was guaranteed by the existence of the Electoral Court, the political parties registered in the legal system would be able to control the voting process and the counting of the votes, and the opposition had more access to the media through some newspapers, weekly magazines and radios. However, many things could still hinder the normal, transparent development of the plebiscite. For example, the states of emergency were maintained and there was an unequal access to television. For these reasons, and to make the voters feel that the triumph of *No* would not be denied, the Concertación asked for a series of guarantees of transparency and legitimacy for the plebiscitary process, and organized a system to control, oversee and count votes parallel to the official voting and counting process. With this system the government could still commit fraud if it wanted to. But the opposition would at least have the resources to prove before the country and the rest of the world that this fraud had been done, and defend the victory of the *No* with social mobilization.

While the Concertación insisted that a fraud would not be possible, it also stated that if something like that was to happen, the citizenship would have to remain calm and wait for a call for peaceful mobilization, not to alter stability and public order, but only in search of recognition of the opposition's triumph. Behind this permanent call to calm was the fear of a situation that the opposition had no way to control: a possible auto-coup if the *No* won. This fear was very present in the citizenship as well as in the political leaders, and there was special care in avoiding any kind of attitude that would unleash something like that. In fact, several government officials and Army

⁹⁰ "Nadie puede eludir sus responsabilidades por lo ocurrido el 11 de septiembre", en *El Mercurio*, Santiago 21 de febrero de 1988, C2.

⁹¹ "Alternativa de oposición", *Qué Pasa* (Santiago), N° 874 (7-13.1.1988), pp.18-19.

⁹² "Por qué hay gente que teme votar", in *La Época* (Sunday supplement), Santiago August 21 1988, pp.2.

officers had fueled this fear the whole year long in speeches, interviews or press articles⁹³. The opposition could do nothing about a new coup; it could not confront the tanks and arms with computers and cell phones, so preoccupation was especially strong among political leaders. This was perhaps the only fear that the opposition could not counteract, because this fear was very deep-rooted inside them too. In fact, these ideas weren't far-fetched. There are trustworthy reports stating that this possibility was considered in La Moneda the night of the plebiscite, once the government's defeat was known⁹⁴.

The third axis of the opposition's campaign consisted in constructing a speech based on happiness, hope and the idea of the reconciliation of Chileans; a speech that looked towards the future as the most valid road to overcome the nightmare that Chile had gone through during the 15 years of dictatorship. This speech stated that the Chile of the future, born of the opposition's victory in the plebiscite, would recover its long democratic tradition. It would become a real home, a homeland for all Chileans, no matter how they thought, whether they belonged to the left, center or right, in favor of against Pinochet. This message was one of optimism, of spreading the idea that the triumph of *No* would mean moving forwards and leaving the archaism of Pinochet's personal government behind, a government that had prevented the country from living in democracy and that hadn't distributed the benefits of modernization among the entire society.

The choice proposed by the opposition wasn't to go back to the past or move on. The real choice that was at stake in the plebiscite was to choose a democratic future or to perpetuate the dictatorship and the 15 darkest years in the history of the country⁹⁵.

In this message, historic memory was very present. From the beginning, the opposition stated that the *No* option was the ideal opportunity for Chile to meet again with its history and democratic tradition⁹⁶. The speech of the opposition appealed to the historic memory from the past prior to the coup, so as to recover the democratic values that had always characterized Chile.

This campaign tried to counteract the negative image divulged by the government about Chile's democratic past, the idea that nothing had been done in the country during the 50 years that lapsed between the approval of the Constitution of 1925 and the military coup, and that all achievements were exclusively performed by the military regime. The opposition wanted to vindicate the freedom and prestige Chile had had during this 50 year period, and all the advances made in that period that contributed to the modernity it had in 1988. In short, it tried to show that in the past there had not only been queues, violence and lack of provisions, but that Chile also had a past in which very good things had been done. The country had once been internationally respected for its democracy. The opposition remarked that the fatherland belonged to all Chileans, and that there was no use for the logic of friends and enemies imposed by the dictatorship⁹⁷.

From the point of view of the recent past, the opposition's speech appealed to the historic memory of the larger part of Chileans, a memory marked by the end of democracy, the violence of repression and human rights violations; by the impoverishment of the majority and the complete hopelessness for the youngest generations. This speech admitted that the Unidad Popular had been extremely negative for ample sectors of society, but stated that this was something of the far past, already overcome, and that these mistakes would not be repeated again. The dictatorship had been

⁹³ "La doctrina de la intervención", in *La Época*, Santiago, May 29 1988, 7. "El Chantaje del Golpe", *Apsi* (Santiago), N° 254 (30.5-6.6.1988), 6. "La cohesión nace de los corvos", *Apsi* (Santiago), N° 246 (4-10.4.1988).

⁹⁴ "La historia del un golpe frustrado", *Apsi* (Santiago), N° 275 /24-30.10.1988). It has also been confirmed by recent declarations of the retired general Fernando Matthei, Commander in Chief of the Air Force and member of the Junta. In his book "Mi testimonio" and in several declarations to the written press and television, the general has manifested that the night after the plebiscite general Pinochet and the army had serious intentions to deny the triumph of the opposition and to perform an auto-coup. See "El Fraude de la Noche Roja", *El Periodista* (Santiago). <http://www.elperiodista.cl/newtenberg/1435/article-36145.html>

⁹⁵ "Campana histórica y desmesurada", in *La Época*, Santiago May 8 1988, 6.

⁹⁶ Patricio Aylwin: Ofrecemos un camino para Chile para convivir y trabajar en democracia", in *La Época*, Santiago August 1 1988, 11.

⁹⁷ "Aylwin: vamos a ganar una patria para todos", in *La Época*, Santiago October 2 1988, 10-11.

much worse, because the levels of violence of that time had never been seen before in Chile. And while there had been important modernizations during the dictatorship, these had brought along an impoverishment in ample sectors of society, which had seen their living levels reduced to below the ones they had during the government of the Unidad Popular. Many promises had been left unfulfilled. The military government had imposed a state of war in the country, dividing it between friends and enemies, using fear and violence to keep control of the country. And there was no freedom, and freedom could not be reduced to the freedom of buying, as the regime did⁹⁸. The speech of the opposition was meant to blend the memory of the dictatorship with the chaotic life of Chileans, so they would want to leave it behind and adhere to the democratic future offered by the opposition, which would be a new reality for all Chileans, without exclusion.

The opposition stated that during the plebiscite the voters would have to decide if they would go on for another 8 years under the same authoritarian and confrontational system, or if they would choose a future in which Chile would restore its democratic tradition and become a fatherland again for all Chileans. In other words: if they wanted to continue with the situation of exiles, repression, poverty, unemployment and privileges of a minority; or if they preferred freedom, justice, participation and the end to favoritisms⁹⁹. *Yes* represented the continuity of a chaotic present while *No* opened the doors to a truly democratic future.

The opposition also wanted to show the Chile hidden by the regime, the Chile of the majority, so the latter could see its own situation and understand that it was shared by many more. Opposition wanted the voters to know that poverty, unemployment, hunger and repression wasn't an exclusive consequence of their acts, but that these were the effect of the dictatorship's policies. Inside this logic, there were constant comparisons between the situation of Chile in 1988 and that of 1970, to prove that under democratic governments the conditions of life had been much better than during the dictatorship. The *No* partisans wanted to put an end to the ideas that Chile had been born in 1973 and that nothing had been there before, that the military regime had done all the good things; and prove that a large part of the modernizations of the time were the result of policies that had been put in practice long before the militaries came to power. The purpose of these comparisons was to give more strength to the idea that the restoration of democracy was also the most adequate way to surpass the different standards of living of the population.

The most noticeable thing of this speech was that, instead of expressing those accusations in a tone of condemnation and criticism, it used a tone of joy, hope and reconciliation; always positive, always accompanying the criticism with a message of hope that in the future everything would be better. The purpose was not only to make people conscious of how bad they were doing, as this would only have increased the fear and the apathy of the plebiscite; they raised public awareness accompanying this process with the hope that with the triumph of *No* there would be a better Chile.

The message was that the triumph of *No* wouldn't be that of the Concertación, but of all Chileans over their past that had been loaded with divisions, hates and fears; that the *No* would open up the way to peace and reconciliation and a democratic system with space for all, even the Armed Forces.

This spirit of unity, optimism, joy and hope was to be seen in all the symbols of the campaign: the rainbow, representing with its colors the ideological diversity surrounding the *No* and the happy and youthful spirit of the campaign; the slogan *Chile, la alegría ya viene* (*Chile, happiness is coming*) tried to generate the hope that there could be a better future, without fate and fear, loaded with happiness for all Chileans; and the hymn that wonderfully expressed the spirit of the campaign. The jingle *Chile, happiness is coming* clearly reflected all the criticism to the living conditions that existed under military rule, but with an optimistic and hopeful tone. The message was that those living conditions could be overcome and turned into something better through the

⁹⁸ "Pasado reciente y pasado lejano", in *La Época*, Santiago October 3 1988, 7.

⁹⁹ "Campana histórica y desmesurada", in *La Época*, Santiago May 8 1988, 6.

No. The song expressed that “faced with a message of darkness, there is one of light; faced with lies, there is something to believe in, a song to sing; faced with the sick mentality of dictatorship, there is a healthy, good intentioned and simple song”¹⁰⁰. It was also a song of participation, which invited all to identify and sing, to say *No* to dictatorship, to violence, misery, without fear, with the arms of reconciliation born of joy, hope and peace. It was a song that called out to leave the past behind and look towards the future as something promising, of which all Chileans would be a part and that at last freedom, justice and dignity would be recovered.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Chile, hapiness is coming | We are going to say Nooo |
| Chile, hapiness is coming | With the strength of my voice |
| | We are going to say Nooo |
| Because whatever they say | I sing it without fear |
| I am free to think for myself | We are going to say Nooo |
| Because I feel it is time | Together, towards victory |
| To become free | We are going to say Nooo |
| How much longer now with the abuses | For life and for peace. |
| It is time to change | |
| Because there’s been enough misery | Let’s put an end to death |
| I am going to say No | Now is the chance |
| | To conquer violence |
| Because a rainbow is born | With the arms of peace |
| After a storm | Because I believe that my fatherland |
| Because I want the blossoming | Needs dignity |
| Of thousand ways of thinking | For a Chile for all |
| Because without the dictatorship | We are going to say NO |
| Happiness will come | |
| Because I think about the future | |
| I am going to say NO | |

2.3 *Electioneering communications on television*

The televised electioneering communications was guaranteed in the Ley de Votaciones y Escrutinios (Law of Voting and Counting) so the different options would have equal access to this important medium, and they were allowed to dispose of 15 minutes daily in national television network, during the 27 days before the plebiscite.

While it was part of both campaigns, this phenomenon will be analyzed separately, for the large media impact it had. The electioneering communication was the program with the largest audience during the month of transmission, with close to four and a half million viewers daily, which made it a sure topic of conversation in practically all areas of society¹⁰¹. The fact that the *Yes* and *No* could face their proposals contiguously on television, made it possible to compare them, discover the true nature of the message of each one, compare the images and contents. In fact, the program’s real importance was that it clarified the difference in points of view of the campaign of the opposition and the government. From the first day, the superior technical and esthetical quality of the *No* program was clearly to be seen. With a speech marked by happiness, colors, a sense of hope and the wish for reconciliation between all Chileans, it was no doubt the winner of the

¹⁰⁰ Jaime de Aguirre: “Primer movimiento de concierto”, in *La Campaña del No vista por sus creadores*, Santiago, Melquiades, 1989, 121.

¹⁰¹ “Sumando y restando”, *Qué Pasa* (Santiago), N° 914 (13-20.10.1988), 10.

televised propaganda. On the other side, the *Yes* program was in red, white and black, and was mainly directed at generating terror and openly disqualifying the opposition.

Yes electioneering communications

The *Yes* program summed up what the regime had been doing for the last 15 years, and especially what it had done in 1988. Thematically, it used the same elements of the rest of the campaign: the economic achievements and terror, and it was an extension of the campaign of *There are millions of us* and *Yes, you choose*¹⁰². This program did not offer anything new from what had already been seen, and this ended up saturating the viewers. At this point, the communications did not offer propaganda, but a redundancy of the ideas that had been developed in all the stages of the campaign since 1987¹⁰³.

The message of the government's deeds mainly concentrated on the economic achievements, and more priority was given to numbers than to the human factor, which made it technocratic, one-dimensional and cold¹⁰⁴. In fact, not even Pinochet was to be seen very often, he only had very isolated and short appearances. Votes for the *Yes* option were pursued more for the deeds of the government than for the candidate¹⁰⁵. The only difference from the previous campaigns was the new slogan: *Chile, a triumphant country*, aimed at spreading the image of Chile as a leader inside Latin America, and emphasized the important advances during the 15 years of government.

Meanwhile, in the message of terror, 1973 was present from the beginning and showed the same ideas and images used during the 15 years of dictatorship to construct the historic memory of the Unidad Popular. This historic memory characterized by the most negative elements of Allende's government was the basis to transmit the relationship *No* = past = UP = Marxist violence¹⁰⁶. With this, the government tried to discredit the option of the opposition and to present it as the sure way back to the Unidad Popular and the Marxist threat. Images were shown of the chaos during the Unidad Popular, all original and in black and white, to deepen the sense of fear and insecurity with the sad, grey and somber past, in contraposition to the colors in which the modernizations by the military government were presented. Many of these spots ended with the sentence *You choose. We go forward or we go back to the UP*, in an attempt to have the viewer see, remember and weigh up what was more convenient for him and the country.

There was also a series of spots about the salvation by the regime from the chaos the UP had left the country in. In that sense, the most exemplifying ones are those of the tunnel, two spots that showed how the Unidad Popular had placed Chile in a dark tunnel and the Armed Forces had rescued it. The first spot showed the entrance to a tunnel that became darker and darker, while a voice that got distorted along the way said:

Those who today sell happiness love and peace, are the same who can lead Chile to a tunnel with no end, towards disorder, inflation, fear, violence, expropriations. If you vote No, you go back to the darkness of a looser country and Chile comes to a stop.

The second spot of the tunnel showed the reverse process, the exit of the tunnel from the darkness towards the light, while the voice was getting more understandable while the camera moved on, and it said:

¹⁰² María Eugenia Hirmas: "La Franja Televisiva: entre la alegría y el miedo", in Diego Portales and Guillermo Sunkel, *La política en pantalla*. Santiago, ILET/CESOC, 1989, 122.

¹⁰³ "El desconocido impacto de la franja política" in *La Época (En el Plebiscito)*, Santiago, September 19 1988, .6.

¹⁰⁴ "El desconocido impacto de la franja política" *op. cit.*, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Hirmas, *op. cit.*, 118.

¹⁰⁶ "Balance del Sí en TV", in *La Época* (supplement *En el Plebiscito*), Santiago October 5 1988, 6.

Fifteen years ago this country lived in the middle of a tunnel, in the darkness of a looser country. But Chile moved on, with sacrifice, with faith, with the strength of a country that wanted to be a winner country. Now that Chile made it, you must vote Yes so Chile can continue on the road to success.

Finally, the *Yes* program also had contra propaganda, and “instead of innovating and posing new arguments, it reacted and responded to all the statements of the opposition’s propaganda”¹⁰⁷. The songs, the sketches and testimonies of the *No* were altered and turned into something violent. The accentuation of violence made the government exaggerate the images of blood, oppression, violence, terrorism, in trying to identify the *No* option with terrorism and violence.

No electioneering communications

The *No* program became a true phenomenon. Seeing politicians of the opposition on screen after 15 years of complete marginalization, after being so insulted by the regime, with a message full of happiness, humor, hope and reconciliation, in an image full of colors and pleasant surroundings, happy youngsters and families, caused a great positive impact, especially in comparison with the opaque, sad, economically centered and frightful *Yes* program. People felt stimulated by the message’s optimism, by the sticky rhythm of its songs and the joyous and fresh images, and adopted a more secure and less frightened position towards the plebiscite.

The program of the opposition was one of the whole opposition and of all the Chileans, went out to the streets, to the shanty towns, the center, the neighborhoods, the places where daily life went on. Its main figures were common men, women and youngsters, from poor areas, from the rich parts of town, from small towns; people whose opinions had never before appeared on television¹⁰⁸. It was a mirror of the reality the majority of the country lived in, and a large part of society felt reflected and identified by what was shown. Therefore, it was more than the propaganda for the *No* option, it was the propaganda for all Chileans, through which the population saw their hope for a better Chile be reborn, different from the one they had under the rule of Pinochet. This ideal Chile would only be attained if the *No* option won the plebiscite¹⁰⁹.

Just like the rest of the campaign, priority was placed on the speech of happiness, hope and reconciliation, and while there was a constant appeal to the historic memory with the double logic of the distant and near past, it was always done with a message of hope in a better future for all, if the opposition’s option won. The appeals to the past were used in the vision of future that prevailed in the program. All images were of the present or showed what the future of Chile could be like. There were no images of the Unidad Popular or in black and white, everything was in color. In fact there were not even images of presidents Frei and Allende. The idea opposition was trying to reinforce, based on the resource of memory, was that Chileans could build a better future, one in which the democratic values of the Chilean nation would be restored, in which the mistakes of the Unidad Popular would be left behind, the divisions that had separated Chileans and all the chaos in which the dictatorship had left the country, to become again the country of all Chileans.

This approach made it possible to mention the most complicated subjects of the military regime, like human rights violations, exile, torture, State terrorism, the disappeared, misery and poverty, as part of what had been daily life for the great majority of Chileans during the dictatorship¹¹⁰, presenting them “through symbols, with measure and dignity and with the intention

¹⁰⁷ Hirmas, *op. cit.*, 125.

¹⁰⁸ Augusto Góngora: “Un muro, una ventana, un espejo”, in *La Campaña del No vista por sus creadores*, Santiago, Melquíades, 1989, 114.

¹⁰⁹ Tironi, *La invisible*, 44.

¹¹⁰ Juan Gabriel Valdés: “Jerarcas, comisarios y creativos”, in *La Campaña del No vista por sus creadores*, Santiago, Melquíades, 1989, 98.

to have Chileans learn from them and be able to overcome them”¹¹¹. In this way, these subjects were no longer seen from the perspective of terror, but as a deplorable truth from which all, in some way or another, had been victims and that had to be left behind.

What stands out most in the recalling of those deplorable facts, was that it wasn't done from a macabre point of view. There were no suffering recounts, mutilated people, or violent scenes, like the ones the *Yes* program used. On the contrary, since the *No* intended to eliminate fear and not to spread it, the subject was tackled with the highest delicacy, with simple images and languages that helped Chileans to take conscience of this reality and to say “no more”.

A clear example of this is a video in which is shown a series of children's drawings of the symbols of the *No* option: the rainbow, the word NO, etc., while a voice recounts the high number of human rights violations and how this memory makes it necessary to seek peace for Chile. So, instead of using images of executions or bodies for such a delicate and deplorable subject, there were infantile images that represent joy and hope of a better future. The spot that dealt with poverty followed the same logic. It appealed to emotions and caused great impact, and is one of the most remembered until today: the spot about doña Yolita. In this spot, a very poor old woman comes into a common shop, approaches the shopkeeper and asks him for two loaves of bread and tea, but only one teabag because, after looking into her purse, she realizes that the money she has with her wasn't enough to buy two. At the end of the commercial, a voice says: *We all have a reason to vote NO. No more misery.*

With this tone and message, the *No* campaign was successful. It convinced the Chileans that this option would give them democracy and a future, and not the *Yes*; that peace, security, economic stability for the majority and orderly and peaceful changes would come with the opposition and not with the government. Of course, the mistakes of the government's campaign had influence in its defeat as well.

The main mistake of the government was that it wrongly interpreted the fact that the country wanted visions of the future. It reasoned that it was enough to identify *Yes* with the future and *No* with the past. It was wrong and only managed to make its offer look ambiguous. It was difficult to understand that the great achievements of the government were pointed out, but that at the same time these would be at risk if *No* won. What did this mean? Wasn't the established institutionality stable? Was the economic model imposed by the government so fragile that it would succumb so fast, if the opposition won? And if this was so, could they really assure the government's stability in the future and fulfill the promise that the benefits of economic development would reach all sectors of society?

Something similar happened with the electioneering communications. The excessive use of terror and “of the images of blood, oppression, violence, terrorism were done to identify the *No* option with terrorism and violence. But the opposite happened: the viewers identified these images with the *Yes* option, because it was shown in its propaganda”¹¹². The idea of winning votes identifying the *No* with the past and with violence didn't bear fruit. On the contrary, all this reiteration by the government gave people the idea that the violent chaos was more possible if the government continued, and not if the opposition won, especially since the opposition's speech was completely opposite.

However, their campaign wasn't a total disaster. The government lost the plebiscite, but obtained 43% of the votes. One can suppose that loyalty to the government and recognition of its work was ample, or that the campaign of terror had some effect.

Be as it may, the opposition won the plebiscite, and from then on the road to transition would be build; a road that, despite the importance of the appeals to memory during the plebiscitary

¹¹¹ Hirmas, *op. cit.*, 129.

¹¹² Juan Enrique Forch: “Talentos de la marginalidad a la legalidad”, in *La Campaña del No vista por sus creadores*, Santiago, Melquiádes, 1989, 106.

campaign, was characterized by a growing silencing and oblivion of this memory inside the political elites. We will outline this phenomenon next.

3. THE TREATMENT OF MEMORY DURING CHILEAN TRANSITION

On October 5th 1988, the opposition won with 54% of the votes. This meant that the candidate of the Commanders in Chief was defeated. The 16 years planned in the constitution would not be fulfilled. Pinochet would not rule for 24 years, the Chileans felt that 17 years was more than enough. However, despite the defeat and even when Pinochet recognized it, he decided not to give in to the pressures of the opposition and did not resign. He stated clearly that the itinerary established by the constitution would not be modified, and would be literally fulfilled¹¹³, that is to say, presidential elections wouldn't be before December 1989 and he wouldn't leave the presidency before March 1990.

The initial intentions of the opposition were to alter the constitutional itinerary and to have presidential and parliamentary elections sooner, as well as the coming to power of a democratically elected president. After Pinochet's declarations, the opposition left all its intentions aside, decided to accept the constitutional itinerary and concentrated all its energy on a negotiation to reform the Constitution.

There is a series of reasons behind this decision. In the first place, while the *No* had won the plebiscite, victory had been far from overwhelming. They had 54% of the citizens support, but 43% of Chileans still gave the government their support. They could not deny their institutionality completely, it was necessary to generate some mechanism to assure that the new Chile would really be for all. Secondly, the sectors of the opposition thought that to become a true government alliance and to win the presidential elections and obtain majority in the parliamentary elections, time was needed, and the year of preparation established by the constitution was very useful to this end. Thirdly, in the opposition, especially in the political parties that formed the Concertación, *political realism*¹¹⁴ took precedence. The years of dictatorship and the plebiscitary campaign had shown them that people were tired of extremisms, that they wanted democracy, but in peace and quiet, and this made them conclude that the pressures and social mobilizations to have Pinochet abandon power, could only lead to a growing instability and to an institutional and juridical void. This could derive, firstly, in a general discontent among the entrepreneurs, which would bring bad consequences for the stability in the economic system; and worse, it could lead to a new military intervention.

After winning the plebiscite, the parties of the Concertación felt that they had to begin constructing the road to democracy. For this, they thought they had to leave aside their demands of an immediate political change, and look for an agreement that would make it possible to advance towards an effective democracy, through the reform of the Constitution of 1980. There were sectors inside the opposition that emphatically rejected the legitimacy of the Constitution and wanted to make a new Constitution (especially the PC and PS), but the logic of consensus made it impossible to materialize this point of view. After all, the Constitution of 1980 was in force at the time and that could not be denied. Many of its aspects had nothing to do with what was internationally understood to be a true democracy¹¹⁵, and this is why it was urgent to make some modifications to it, but with a consensus. Given the circumstances the country faced at the time, the fear existing among the opposition for a new military intervention and the memory of the extremisms they had

¹¹³ "Pinochet anunció que se mantendrá en sus puestos", in *La Época*, Santiago October 7 1988, 10.

¹¹⁴ Tomás Moulian, *Chile actual: anatomía de un mito*, Santiago, LOM, 1997, 353.

¹¹⁵ Among the aspects most criticized by the opposition one can point out the military tutelage imposed through the Consejo de Seguridad Nacional (National Security Council), the excessive power of the president, the eight article, the existence of senators designated by Pinochet, and the lack of security in the respect of human rights. For a deeper analysis see: Francisco Geisse and José Antonio Ramírez, *La reforma Constitucional*. Santiago, CESOC y Ediciones Chile América, 1989.

embodied in the past – and that had had such unfortunate consequences – led the Concertación, headed by the Democracia Cristiana, to pursue a negotiated reform with the military regime and the democratic sectors of the right. They were looking for changes that would give the Constitution *as much as possible* a more democratic character, as the president of the DC Patricio Aylwin said¹¹⁶.

This attitude of the opposition defined the character of the transition to democracy: it would be an agreed upon transition, not one of ruptures; a transition after closed doors, among political leaders and in which the social movement that was so important in the resistance and opposition to the dictatorship, had no place. The future of Chile would be decided by the political elite that seemed to have taken on the emblem of illustrated despotism, *a transition for the people, but without the people*:

The Houses of the *No*, spread throughout the country, closed their doors that night, never to open them again. Those places where the hope of democracy had been nurtured; and the participation of young people, slum dwellers, professionals, women, artists, rank members of the political parties, independents, diverse minorities had been nurtured, closed their curtains.

The space that had been conquered against dictatorship and fear with the illusion of anonymous crowds was now closed. In that day of triumph of the masses, with a simple act of omission, the politicians of the opposition squandered the most efficient means of social negotiation that they had designed themselves. There a transition constructed for the people, but avoiding the people was ordered. That wonderful party of democracy ended in a *coitus interruptus*, in the beginning of civil absence¹¹⁷.

The modifications to the constitution were negotiated and agreed upon with the democratic right and the government, and submitted to plebiscite in July 1989. However, in these negotiations, the Concertación dropped many of its key demands. Even those that supported these reforms called them “modest”¹¹⁸ but necessary to assure the peaceful transition to democracy. It was feared that the military had no real disposition to hand over power to an elected president from the opposition, and so the first priority of the parties of the Concertación was “to assure the transference of the government, even if the transference of power isn’t simultaneously attained”¹¹⁹. The Concertación chose for consensus and assumed that there would be no real democracy if its characteristics weren’t agreed upon with the Armed Forces and the right¹²⁰, transcendental actors for the normal functioning of the democratic system. The first process of reform hadn’t been as expected, but they had the hope that this would be done further on. After all, RN had committed itself to study the reforms that had been left pending, once the new democratic government came to power. However, this agreement wasn’t fulfilled in the agreed upon time-span and 16 years had to pass for some of these reforms to come into force, during the government of Ricardo Lagos. These reforms were already key topics for the opposition in 1989: they included abolishing the existence of senators designated by Pinochet, and including the possibility for the president to dispose of the positions of Commander in Chief of the Army and the General Director of the Police.

The whole reform negotiating process was a preview of what politics during the governments of the Concertación would be like. The negotiations were done in close secrecy by a very small political group and without considering the citizenship’s opinion as for determining what to reform and what not. The plebiscite of the reforms was agreed upon, supported by almost all political sectors and without any type of debate or difference of opinion, but it passed almost

¹¹⁶ According to the transitory articles of the constitution, the only way to reform the constitution before the permanent articles came into force was through a proposal of the Junta that should be voted in plebiscite.

¹¹⁷ Rafael Otano, *Crónica de la transición*, Santiago, Editorial Planeta, 1995, 69.

¹¹⁸ Genaro Arriagada, *Por la razón o la fuerza. Chile bajo Pinochet*. Santiago, Editorial Sudamericana, 1998, 270. 120 Correa, *op. cit.*, 339.

¹¹⁹ Correa, *op. cit.*, 339.

¹²⁰ Felipe Portales: *Chile, una democracia tutelada*. Santiago, Editorial Sudamericana, 2000, 43- 44.

without being noticed. While the contents had great transcendence for the future of democracy they were practically unknown for the majority of Chileans¹²¹. This situation was like an antechamber to the growing depoliticization that characterized the last three democratic governments¹²². The social mobilization the politicians capitalized on during the days of protests and the plebiscitary campaign was more and more left aside, and this derived in a constantly growing indifference from the citizenship towards politics, especially among the youth¹²³.

On the other hand, the logic of consensus that characterized the negotiations about the reforms reinforced the image of “tie” given to the result of the plebiscite of October 5th that characterized the whole transition process¹²⁴. During the campaign and after the *No* triumph the opposition stated that this was a triumph for all Chileans, with no winners or losers, to construct a Chile in which all sectors would have space and be heard. Apparently, the opposition took this idea very seriously. There was also still fear that any substantial and radical alteration of the institutionality established by the dictatorship could derive in a new military intervention. For these reasons, the Concertación accepted the government in a political situation that left much to be desired in terms of democracy: the Constitution of 1980 maintained some of its most authoritarian aspects. Before retiring from power the military government had taken all necessary measures to assure the continuity of the institutions and the economic system it had established; the Armed Forces were highly independent from the government and what was worse, the dictator hadn't retired to his home, but remained as Commander in Chief of the Army. This was the same position he was in when he headed the military coup in 1973, and before leaving the presidency he warned that the democracy would end if any of his men was as much as touched in relation with human rights violations¹²⁵. The new government started its period in many aspects with its hands tied, due to the authoritarian ties established by the regime¹²⁶. However, it was considered to be a price worth paying for the restoration of democracy. As time passed, this gave the feeling that the country wasn't a democracy yet and that the transition hadn't ended and wouldn't end until reforms were made to turn the political system in a real democracy. In that sense, the negotiation about the reforms and the modifications they established, marked the origin of what has been called the inconclusive transition or the eternal transition, a remedy that has already lasted as long as the disease it was trying to cure.

The attitude of consensus that has characterized the governments of the Concertación and that has tried by all means to develop a democracy in which agreement and not antagonism has priority, negation and not imposition, has inevitably been marked by memory. In the beginning of the transition, memory played a very important part in the political sectors, especially in the parties that formed the Concertación. The plebiscitary campaign made that clear. The opposition felt greatly responsible for the crisis that had conducted Chile to a dictatorship of almost 17 years; at the same time they felt obliged to restore the democracy they had contributed to loose. To this end, they committed themselves to learn from the past and avoid the same mistakes. That is why their motto was an *agreed upon transition*, a transition in which the spirit of agreement and reconciliation would take priority; one that would leave the years of confrontations and breakups aside, the years of divisions and sectarianisms. The parties of the opposition tried to behave as differently as

¹²¹ Otano, *op. cit.*, 84.

¹²² Portales, Felipe, *op. cit.*, 46.

¹²³ This is shown by the numbers of those inscribed in the voters' registers and by the results of surveys by the National Institute of Youth (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud, INJUV).

¹²⁴ Otano, *op. cit.*, 83.

¹²⁵ Otano, *op. cit.*, 85.

¹²⁶ Some of the authoritarian ties established by the military regime, especially during its last year of government, is the huge privatization process of companies, the report of the Ley Orgánica de las Fuerzas Armadas (Law of Armed Forces), the Ley del Estado Empresario (Law of Entrepreneur State), la Ley Orgánica Constitucional de la Educación (LOCE, Organic Constitucional Law of Education) and the reorganization of the highest magistrals of the Judicial Power, who were designated according to the interests of the military regime, to avoid any judicial action against the military for human rights violations.

possible from the conduct they had during the governments of the Democracia Cristiana and Unidad Popular, that is why they had the disposition to negotiate with everyone and to yield to whatever was necessary. The time in which they pursued objectives without giving way to anyone was over. Now was the time to restore a democracy with the broadest political spectrum possible, and it didn't matter much what had to be given in to.

All these factors help explain why despite its fierce opposition to the military regime and institutionality, the Concertación has settled with so little for so long; why it accepted taking over a government limited by the authoritarian enclaves the military regime went lengths to leave. They can explain why 15 years had to pass and three governments of the Concertación to go on into the subject of constitutional reforms; why the subject of human rights violations was focused for so long only to truth (and a limited one) and not justice. Eight years would have to pass and a trial by a foreign tribunal and Pinochet's detention in London for genocide, for Chilean tribunals to give course to the trials against those responsible for the human rights violations during the dictatorship. We don't intend to say that memory can completely explain the characteristics of Chilean transition and its origins. Doubtlessly, there is a series of other social, political, economical, philosophical and international factors that can give a more complete and global explanation. We want to point out that memory, especially historic memory, has a key role in explaining the different phenomena that occur in a certain society, especially when this society has gone through traumatic periods it wants to overcome and leave behind, trying to learn from them to avoid repeating them, just as the Chilean society has done during the last four decades.

Date of reception: June 2005.

Date of acceptance: August 2006.

Translated by Cristina Labarca

Translation from *Historia* [on line]. jul./dec. 2006, vol. 2, n.º 39, pp. 431-475. ISSN 0073-2435.