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**THE TRUTH IS IN THE FACTS: TENSION BETWEEN OBJECTIVITY AND  
OPPOSITION. RADIO COOPERATIVA DURING THE DICTATORSHIP**

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**ABSTRACT**

The following article analyzes the different journalist strategies followed by *Radio Cooperativa* that allowed its positioning as an opposition media within the communication industry during the dictatorship. The construction of its identity was built upon a discourse of objectivity promoted during the military regime. The radio's success was due to its strategy of informing about facts that were silenced in a context of repression and censorship. This transformed information into a political theme that was not influenced by political parties. To accomplish this, several archival sources were revised including the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* Archives, *Cooperativa Radio* archival materials as well as *Colegio de Periodistas* records.

**Key words:** Radio Cooperativa, journalist strategies, journalistic objectivity, radio identity.

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## PRESENTATION

“Every observer of contemporary human events is also a participant of them,  
and is therefore morally involved in them...”

ARNOLD TOYNBEE

On May 13th 1983 the news programs of Radio Cooperativa Vitalicia in Santiago, Temuco and Valparaíso were indefinitely suspended through Supreme Decree 593 signed by the Home Secretary, Sergio Onofre Jarpa. The Division of Social Communication (*División de Comunicación Social*, DINACOS)<sup>2</sup> pointed out to the media that this measure was taken because of the misrepresentation of information in the agitation campaign the radio station had allegedly broadcasted on May 11<sup>th</sup>. This had been done through interviews, comments, news and transmissions of all kinds, with the clear political intent to create an artificial climate of agitation and public unrest. That same day in which the news signal of Cooperativa went off the dial, public support was felt from different areas of society. The Journalist Association, Human Rights Commission, students of the Universidad de Chile, trade unions, and even the Catholic Church joined in the cause to regain the voice of one of the radios with most listeners throughout Chile<sup>3</sup>.

The demands for the reopening of the sender were expressed in acts of solidarity with all the media that, more than once, had had their news programs suppressed or restricted because they entailed a defense of democracy and an opposition to the military regime<sup>4</sup>. Also, through these acts, civil society claimed and demanded a space that in some way would give them back the sense of belonging to a community that had been disintegrated by the dictatorship.

In fact, Cooperativa had positioned itself in the collective imaginary as *the radio of all Chileans*. All members of the radio shuddered with the three thousand signatures and messages they received until the lifting of the suspension. They could not believe the social impact the radio had caused because it renounced to defend an own opinion in comments or editorials and to adhere to the political parties of the opposition; its sole purpose was to present all facts from the point of view of the actors, no matter what political group they belonged to<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Dirección Nacional de Comunicación Social del Gobierno* (DINACOS) was a body dependent on the General Secretary of Government created by the military junta. One of its functions was to advise the ministry in the formulation of communications policies and the “supervision of funding, edition and publication, circulation, distribution and commercialization in any way of new newspapers, magazines, periodicals and anything published”. In practice, this meant that DINACOS - besides supervising the contents that were published - was also in charge of allowing or denying the corresponding permits for the existence of media.

<sup>3</sup> Archive of *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* (Vicariate of Solidarity). Resumen de Prensa 1983. “Suspensión de los informativos de la Radio Cooperativa”, 28-30. For effects of abbreviation, the archive will be called AVSCH.

<sup>4</sup> In December 1982, *Apsi* magazine was closed down for nine months. Besides economic costs, this meant a restriction to inform only about international matters. It was prohibited to emit any information about the national context in printed articles. Ana María Foxley, “Seguiremos profundizando la misma línea”, *Revista Hoy*, Santiago, 10 to 16 de March 1983, no page.

In fact, Cooperativa designed its *communicative strategies*<sup>6</sup> based on the discourse of *journalistic objectivity*<sup>7</sup>, an important characteristic of the modern liberal press, and positioned itself in the market of information as a “neutral” media that aimed to inform the population, independently of the political group. However, in a regime of restrictions, the discourse of objectivity stems from a position of opposition, for not only any criticism but also uncontrolled information was considered to be a threat by the authorities, and by the readers it was seen as a form of resistance<sup>8</sup>.

In this way the radio news of Cooperativa produced effects that were not mechanically linked with the empirical principles that constituted their references; that is to say, the representations produced by the radio – that did not look to encourage the masses nor generate a space of explicit confrontation as was thought – allowed society to learn for itself from a certain construction of meaning, in which grammars of production and recognition among the listeners played a role. In this manner and just like other dissident media,

Cooperativa helped to reconstitute a collective memory - different from the one of “fatherland saviors” coined by the military to legitimize their presence – redefining and revalidating the sense of belonging of different individuals to a community of many groups, national and collective, that had been mutilated and divided by the military regime<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>5</sup>In press conferences Luis Ajenjo (general manager of the radio at the time) points out: “We are impressed by all the solidarity. This is a radio that even renounced to a voice of its own, like in comments or editorials, to give room to all facts and points of view of the main characters of these facts”. Ignacio González Camus, “Radio Cooperativa. Silencio noticioso”. *Hoy*, Santiago, 25 to 31 May 1983, 14-15.

<sup>6</sup>By journalistic strategy we understand the “*conjunct of political, journalistic and entrepreneur objectives and definitions that combined give the media a profile of its own*”. That is to say, they are definitions and practical actions that locate a media in the socio cultural context, give it an identity, a function in the scene of communications and a situation in the market of information. Cf. Eduardo Santa Cruz, *Modelos y estrategias de la prensa escrita en procesos de modernización: Chile siglo XX*, Documentos de trabajo, Santiago, Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad Arcis, 1996, 4.

<sup>7</sup>For journalism, objectivity becomes a relevant factor in the conformation of its discourse from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, especially since the massification process of audiences. The discourse of objectivity, a concept coined by positivism, makes it possible to bring together different types of readers that give journalism legitimacy through the development of forms and styles that are translated in a recount of events that are valid for all, and not only for a few subjects. In this manner, objectivity operates as a rhetorical and commercial strategy at the same time. For this reason, journalistic objectivity is not presented as the result of an epistemological reflection, but, on the contrary, is the result of the new commercial strategy that arose in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that is quickly accepted as a journalistic value. That is to say, it becomes an ethical concept. The “doctrine” of objectivity can be understood from three levels: deontology, as an ethical commitment; the level of journalistic investigation, as it demands a conjunct of norms of legal procedure; and the level of rhetoric, as it entails a conjunct of rules of stylistic nature. Cf. Mario Mesquita, *El cuarto equívoco. El poder de los media en la sociedad contemporánea*, Madrid, Editorial Fragua, 2007. Michel Schudson, *Discovering the news. A social history of American Newspaper*, New York, Basic Books, 1979. Gaye Tuchman, *La producción de noticias*, Barcelona, GG Mass Media, 1983.

<sup>8</sup>Juan Pablo Arancibia, *Comunicación Política. Fragmentos para una genealogía de la mediatización en Chile*, Santiago, Editorial ARCIS, 2006, 136-137.

In this construction of collective values and beliefs, the media play a relevant role. They make it possible to structure and organize the presence of the past in all areas of contemporary life. For one part, they are the deposit where memories are saved, as they are able to register and reproduce the events of a period. For another, these registers of memory are constructions in the dialectic between remembering-forgetting, in which the interests of the producers come together in a dynamic way (both from the media and the journalists) and the public. In this way, memory is not only the recount of past events, but also the construction in the present of that which is possible to know and must be remembered, that is to say, that which we consider worth to remember. In this context we must ask ourselves what was the responsibility of the media in the authoritarian regime. Or, put another way, how do these constructions of reality work before and after the 1973 coup?

Some authors, like Steve Stern, highlight the role the media played against the dictatorship, as social actors and in the construction of a memory. A different one – dissident to the official one – that made it possible to regain an image of community<sup>10</sup>. However, the tendency to standardize the unofficial media, where some media of the cultural industry, local and clandestine media come together, prevent seeing nuances in this process. Not all media acted nor defined themselves in the same way faced with the military regime. Each one of them, from their respective platforms of production, designed their own political and commercial strategies that made it possible for them to take a certain position in the political field. For the dissident media, it clearly consisted in denouncing and confronting the policies of the military dictatorship. However, the media did not maintain themselves only with denunciations; there was also the issue of surviving the political crisis of that period.

Before the coup, the structure of media communication was pretty heterogeneous. Every media had its own characteristics. Different from the written press, which was linked to politics from the beginning, the radio always had a plainly commercial character; that is to say, it was conceived mainly as a means of entertainment, fundamental characteristic of the mass culture<sup>11</sup>. In this context, the programs were adapted to the interests of the listeners and the different historical and economic contingencies. So, the news programs soon took up an established space in radial programming, just like those of entertainment<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Rosalinda Bresnahan, "Radio and the movement in Chile 1973-1990. Independent and grass roots voices during the Pinochet dictatorship", *Journal of radio studies*, Vol 9, N° 1, United States, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Steve Stern J., *Battling for hearts and minds. Memory struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988*, Book two of the trilogy: The Memory box of Pinochet's Chile, United State of America, Duke University Press & London, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. Martín-Barbero, Jesús. *De los medios a las mediaciones*, Bogotá, Convenio Andrés Bello, 2003.

Since the 1960s there had been a progressive tendency towards the democratization of the media, and by 1973 there was a plural communications system, open to all opinion groups<sup>13</sup>. This made it possible to incorporate the population in the informative debate, considerably diminishing the exclusion there was in this field<sup>14</sup>. In this process, radio became the political tribune by excellence, a typical element of political culture. All political parties and groups participated - in a direct or indirect manner - in the radio world: the Communist Party (Radio Magallanes), Socialist Party (Radio Corporación), the adherents to Allende's government (Radio Portales), *MAPU* (Radio Candelaria), *Central Única de Trabajadores* (Radio Luis Emilio Recabarren) and *MIR* (Radio Nacional). In this manner, from the new ways of doing politics in a scene for the masses, radio claimed its social place as an effective means to create public opinion<sup>15</sup>. In fact, this was not exclusive of the media that possessed a certain party logic; the communicational field as a whole was in some manner involved in this process of political activity in the public sphere.

Radio Cooperativa, known as one of the radio stations with the largest tradition and with subsidiaries almost in the whole country, was sold in the beginning of the 1970s to *Sociedad Publicitaria y Propaganda Ltda* that belonged to the Christian Democratic Party. At the moment this party only had one public opinion media (*La Prensa* newspaper that had a strong political edge), and opted for the acquisition of the radio station because of the importance and massive reach of that form of communication. The directive board was integrated by Carlos Figueroa, Edmundo Pérez Yoma and Alberto Pulido, who actively participated in the political debates of the time.

The radio did not present itself as a political media (the president of the party, Eduardo Frei Montalva refused to do this), however the social tensions of the moment made it possible for some opinion programs of the radio to construct a space of denunciation against Unidad Popular. The program that caused the most stir in that sense was "At this hour women improvise too", directed by Raquel Correa, Patricia Guzmán, María Eugenia Oyarzún and Silvia Pinto<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Radio Cooperativa started broadcasting news programs two years after its foundation. *Panorama* was the first program of this kind, in charge of Juan Campbell and Emilio Filippi; *Reportajes*, in charge of Hernán Millas and Rafael Otero; and finally in 1952 *El Diario de Cooperativa*, the first news program in Chile that resembled a newspaper. Archivo de la Radio Cooperativa Vitalicia. Historia General de la radio de divulgación pública, 2000. For the remainder of this article, the archive will be called ARCV.

<sup>13</sup> Alfredo Riquelme, "El debate ideológico acerca de las Comunicaciones de Masas en Chile: 1953-1973", *CÉNECA*, Santiago, Agosto, 1984.

<sup>14</sup> Eugenio Tironi and Guillermo Sunkel, "The Modernization of Communications: The Media in the Transition to Democracy in Chile", in *Democracy and the Media. A comparative Perspective*. Edited by Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan, Communication, Society and Politics, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 165-193.

<sup>15</sup> Carlos Catalán *et al.* "Transformaciones del sistema cultural chileno entre 1920 y 1973", *CÉNECA*, Santiago, 1987, 34 onwards.

With the military coup this democratic system of communication – that had characterized the country for more than 50 years – broke down. The media were affected by a combination of measures like confiscations, legal restrictions and the physical repression of journalists and communicators: censorship regulations aimed at demobilizing and depoliticizing the population<sup>17</sup>. The restriction to media continued in a drastic manner until the 1980s, when they were not only controlled by the government, but also by the evolution and dynamics of the systems of mass communication.

#### FROM THE COUP TO THE 1980s

After the military coup, all mass media were intervened and suffered multiple repressions, censorships and informative restrictions<sup>18</sup>. The radio stations that were not closed down (like Cooperativa) took on different roles in the social context of the time. For example, radios Balmaceda and Chilena took on a predominantly

political role, as a platform of denunciation of the abuses committed by the regime<sup>19</sup>. Instead, radio Cooperativa continued the logic of entertainment, which can be seen for example in the incorporation of personalities that represented the mass culture, like Antonio Vodanovic, Julio Martínez, Sergio Livingston, Juan la Rivera, César Antonio Santis, Javier Miranda and Gabriela Velasco, among others. With this, the radio signed up for a strategy that would eventually provide larger incomes, that would get it out of the economic crisis it towed with since the 1970s, and at the same time, protect it from possible repressions<sup>20</sup>. However, the social violence in the country and the closing down of Radio Balmaceda and consequent relegation of Belisario Velasco in Putre made the radio station reconsider its main objective. In this way, it reopened the news program “El Diario de Cooperativa” on November 18<sup>th</sup> 1976, which had been closed after the coup.

In this new period of that program, the director was the journalist Delia Vergara, ex director of the women’s magazine *Paula*, one of the most progressive media linked to the insertion of women in Chilean society towards the 1960s. The program had a team of well known journalists and commentators like Patricio Bañados (editorial), Alejandro Magnet (international), Jaime Hales (legal), René Cortázar (labor situations), Mariano Silva (cinema), José Luis Rosasco (books), Juan Grau (ecology) y Patricia Politzer (politics and economy).

<sup>16</sup> ARCV.

<sup>17</sup> Stern J., *op. cit.*, and Eugenio Tironi, *op. cit.*, 165-193.

<sup>18</sup> During the dictatorship forty communicators were killed or disappeared, 300 were sent into exile and more than 1000 received prohibition to exert their profession. Hernán Uribe, “Prensa y periodismo político en los años 60/70”, in E. Carmona (ed.) *Morir es la noticia*, Santiago, J&C Productores Gráficos Ltda., 1988.

<sup>19</sup> Rosalinda Bresnahan, *op. cit.*, 163-164.

<sup>20</sup> ARCV. *Op. cit.*

The objective was to “establish a news program with a strong political edge that supplied the task of Balmaceda”<sup>21</sup>. One could think that this editorial turnabout responded to a purely political or partisan purpose, but the media’s main aim was to have all ethical principles of informative journalism prevail, that is to say: have the facts be known in an “objective” and pluralist manner. But at that moment the “facts” revolved around abuses and violence by the authorities, so the news programs fell into the most critical subject of the national agenda: human rights<sup>22</sup> and the new economic policies<sup>23</sup>.

The radio programs had the advantage of recounting the facts with immediacy, and with comments through the weeks, depending on the impact the subject caused; that is to say, repeating particular information and the succession of comments about it was aimed at “creating” a topic of public opinion. This news format, that was descriptive, hinted at points of view and opinions, both personal and corporative, about events. In this way, comments like those of Patricia Politzer exposed and condemned the lack of humanity in the *modus operandi* of the military regime:

“...For the renowned public men that signed this declaration, mainly about the cases of Lonquén and Letelier, these *monstrous crimes* can not have been committed without a profound moral degradation of the executioners, and according to the antecedents at hand, the signatories presume these acts are responsibility of the political levels the actors depend on. Today, the words of general Fernando Matthei about a dirty war constitutes, up to a certain point, *the acceptance that human rights have been violated in Chile and that there are several acts that need to be considered*”<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Genaro Arriagada. In Cristian Arismendi, *Factores que incidieron en el aumento de sintonía de Radio Cooperativa entre los años 1980 y 1990*, Tesis para obtener el grado del Licenciado en Comunicación, Santiago, Universidad de Chile, 1992, 15.

<sup>22</sup> Even though human rights abuses were evident, not all media informed about them, clearly their diffusion had to do with an editorial posture, since facts are also a discursive construction with certain mechanisms of selection. In other words, the “facts” are constructed by the interest of who formulates the information: of who decides what must or must not be considered news. Cfr. Teun van Dijk, *La noticia como discurso. Comprensión, estructura y producción de la información*, Barcelona, Paidós Comunicación, 1990.

<sup>23</sup>Patricia Politzer, in charge of economic news, points out that this space became the great news front to criticize the military regime. She points out: "In this terrain there were differences inside the dictatorship itself and it was therefore an area in which we could express opinions and judge the measures that were taken". Carolina Espinoza and Carlos Alzadora, Carlos. *La verdad está en los hechos. 70 años de Radio Cooperativa*, Santiago, Ediciones de Interés Público, 2007.

<sup>24</sup>ARCV. Programa El Diario, Comment on National Current Affairs by Patricia Politzer, March 21st 1979, Program of 7 AM. Italics are not from the original text.

For his part, Jaime Hales (commenter on legal affairs) denounced and questioned the acts of the Chilean justice system during the dictatorship, like the policies of impunity in favor of the Armed Forces and of Order in the country:

"Good morning. News was impressive last Friday. Minister Bañados declared himself incompetent. Adolfo Bañados, minister of the Court of Appeals of Santiago, conducted an investigation about the finding of cadavers in the abandoned mine of Lonquén. (...) As he advanced in the investigation, the minister was able to establish the identities of the dead with a high degree of certainty. They were farmers of the area that were detained in 1973 by Carabineros and disappeared since then. They were people reported disappeared by their relatives, part of the lists once and again denounced by *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*. People detained by Carabineros nobody knew from again. And now they show up buried in a group, clearly with the intention to be hidden in an abandoned lime mine. They are dead and their murderer does not show up. And even if he does, *there will be no punishment because there is a Law of Amnesty for everyone who committed homicides between 1973 and 1978*, in March. But the country should at least know the names of the guilty; of the murderers, even if only for a moral sanction, as well as the obligation of the homicide to compensate the families of the victims, a responsibility that does not disappear with the law of amnesty. *What is the fundament of Minister Bañados's incompetence? That active members of the Forces of Order, that is to say Carabineros are directly involved*"<sup>25</sup>.

Coverage of the most emblematic cases of the time<sup>26</sup> and the confrontational character of the comments made relations with the authorities as well as those inside the radio station tense. Inside the radio, there was a clash between the personalities of the mass media and the journalists, who insisted on denouncing the abuses committed in the country. The former did not approve that the radio station take a "partisan" position about events, as they got an "image of opposition" that was not convenient, if we consider that many of them also worked in other media (like television) that were completely intervened. Calling for an ultimatum, the director of the sender, Carlos Figueroa, together with the directory of the Christian Democratic Party, decided in favor of the journalists and caused the exit of diverse entertainment personalities to other media. With this, it was proven that the editorial posture taken on by "Diario de Cooperativa" was not tolerated by some of the radio's collaborators.

<sup>25</sup> ARCV. El Diario program, Legal comment by Jaime Hales, April 9th 1979, Program of 7AM. Italics are not from the original text.

<sup>26</sup> Among them were demands for extradition by Contreras and Espinoza for the homicide of Orlando Letelier, interview with Gustavo Leigh until the discovery of the bodies in Lonquén. ARCV, Historia General de la radio de divulgación pública, 2000. AVSCH, Anuarios de Prensa y Causas Judiciales.

On the other hand, the discontent of the authorities with the news program led to permanent pressures and threats by the *Dirección Nacional de Comunicación Social* (National Directive of Social Communication, DINACOS). The members of the radio had to concur to the building of Diego Portales in several occasions to appear before this institution because of comments and news they had broadcasted. The regime took it as a fact that there was a large political machinery of opposition behind Cooperativa., that put the new order at risk. However, the repression suffered by the media and society at large prevented the constitution of effective networks with a direct access to the sources of information, especially for a media that functioned inside the logic of the market, like Cooperativa. For this reason, it was "very difficult to get to the directives for a simple reason: they were in the catacombs. When one of them came out, you went to interview him"<sup>27</sup>. On top of this there were devices of self censorship, intended to protect the radio station as a victim-witness of dictatorship:



this was part of the responsibility the media had, as a mediator between facts and the public. In sum, the imaginary of conspiracies of the regime defined Cooperativa as “the other media”, symbolically linking it to the political groups of opposition. This led to the closing down of the subsidiaries of the radio station outside Santiago in 1978.

On March 15<sup>th</sup> 1977 Law Decree N° 1.762 was enacted to create the Undersecretary’s Office of Telecommunications<sup>28</sup>. This institution was in charge of the tuition and technical direction of radio and television stations, and of establishing guidelines for the media industry inside the official framework. Since the years of Unidad Popular, Cooperativa was requesting a renovation of its concessions, an issue that remained unresolved. There are different versions about this subject. Some blame the government of Unidad Popular for denying them the concessions as a mechanism of repression against the Christian Democratic Party. On the other hand, others point out that the military regime lost the corresponding documents, alluding to the fact that these had been burned during the coup because they were in La Moneda<sup>29</sup>. For the case, it is relevant that in some way or another Cooperativa suffered the repressions of the regime for its nerve “to speak the unspeakable”. Ten of its regional radio stations were closed down, only those in Santiago, Valparaíso and Temuco were allowed to continue functioning. As a result, advertisers withdrew and the radio went practically bankrupt with the liquidation of its assets<sup>30</sup>. But, on the other hand, this action showed the fear the government had of a media capable of reproducing the “errors” of the democratic communication system that had functioned in Chile until 1973:

<sup>27</sup> Arismendi, *op. cit.*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Published in *Diario Oficial* of April 30th 1977.

<sup>29</sup> There is discordance between the version of the current radio, and the testimonies of the actors of that time recompiled by Cristian Arismendi. That is why both points of view were enclosed. See ARCV (no page) and Arismendi, *op. cit.*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Lasagni, María Cristina *et al. La Radio en Chile*, Santiago, CENECA, 1988.

“The only thing the dictatorship was not willing to accept at that time was the freedom of expression for a very simple reason: the military thought that one of the most important factors of the fall of Allende was the complete freedom of the media. In the time of the UP, I – as representative of the ARCHI – discussed the closing of radio Agricultura with General Pinochet, who was the chief of the area of Santiago. He was trusted by Allende and it was for a reason that the President promoted him to Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces”<sup>31</sup>.

Although the dictatorship thought that these mechanisms of intervention would lead to the natural death of the radio, this did not happen. On the contrary, with the change of directors and the new communicational strategies implemented by the radio station, it managed to consolidate itself as the most believable media of the 1980s.

## THE PROJECT OF RADIO COOPERATIVA IN THE EIGHTIES

The unfavorable conditions after the closing of the radio’s subsidiaries, the lack of advisers and low rating made the directors reconsider their editorial objectives so as to ensure permanence in the media market<sup>32</sup>. The first change that made it possible to redefine the criteria of the radio station was made inside the board of directors. Genaro Arraigada took on the presidency and Luis Ajenjo became in charge of management<sup>33</sup>. They focused on generating the conditions to attract a massive public; that is to say, they created a new media product, to question all the needs of civil society, with the aim to attract a larger amount of listeners. For the board, the radio was above the political situation of the time. They considered it had attained autonomy from early on in the history of communications in Chile. For that reason, it had to be a professional media, plural, independent and objective, not a platform for political struggle like other media. Genaro Arraigada, director of the radio points out:

“The radio must never take risks. What is this about taking risks... everyone plays a role here in Chilean society. There were some that played it properly, *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, professional associations. But risks are never taken to all or nothing. That does not exist in life. The important thing is that there is a professional, plural, independent and objective work. Here the truth is before everything, whomever this may hurt.”<sup>34</sup>.

In this manner, stating his discourse from the rhetoric of journalism, the radio station could consolidate its

autonomy from partisan positions in the public space. This was key to establish an image of credibility among the listeners.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> The listeners rating for 1980 was 0.8 points, considerable lower than in 1977, when the radio had a rating of 6.9 points. Stern, *op. cit.*, 302.

<sup>33</sup> ARCV, *Historia General de la radio de divulgación pública*, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Arismendi, *op. cit.*, 16.

On the other hand, this autonomy gave the radio some freedom concerning state regulations. In this way it could remain in the space of political opposition as an unofficial media.

With this objective in mind, there was a search for new forms and styles to differentiate the radio station from other media, mainly from those that were considered propagandistic<sup>35</sup>. The confrontational style was eliminated, previously sustained through editorial and informative comments and that had been characteristic of the radio in the last four years of the 1970s. New programming was ordered to Ernesto Molina, director of the publicity agency TEMPORA, who restructured the radio with the idea to see results in the first five years of the 80s.

The system employed was one of continuity, also known as “modular”, in which the programming was composed of small “modules” or repetitive elements that succeed one another in the diffusion of daily news, for instant: informative curtain, music, time slot, etc. The main body was the informative block of “El Diario de Cooperativa”, aimed at informing the facts that took place at the moment. In this way, politics became hidden in the facts.

News programs became more frequent. Besides the three informative blocks that started at 6 AM, there were news flashes all through the day interrupting other programs. There was also the morning mobile, a technological progress that changed the way of informing in the media industry. It consisted of a direct transmission from the place of events, that is to say, the information was given by the reporter himself, who identified himself, telling his name to the listeners. This gave the news a more “human” edge and a touch of immediacy that brought it closer to the public. On the other hand, the support of commentators was key. They were the official and authorized voice, those that inscribed the tone and rhythm of the radio station in collective memory. The voices of Gema Bravo, Manola Robles and Sergio Campos stood out in the middle of a curtain of drums that announced that something was going on there, at that minute, something that spoken in the voice of the hosts, became “truth”. To this were added emblematic phrases that summarized the style of the media and that became the signature of the news programs. These elements show the type of journalism the radio decided on, where the “facts” of all sectors found a tribune. So, slogans like: “*You have the right to know the truth and the truth is in the facts*”, “*Everything can be said if you know how to say it*”, “*If Cooperativa does not broadcast it, it is not news*”, created an image of credibility of the informative product, that was concordant with the ideological space the organization of news intended to span: as a strategy towards democracy and as commercial support.

<sup>35</sup> By propagandistic media we mean all the communication systems that have a strong ideological connotation, with circulation generally in a specific community.

To achieve a higher level of verisimilitude in journalism based on “facts”, Cooperativa included the recounts of victims and victimizers, thus revealing what happened among those who suffered persecution and also among those who designed the policies. For this, precise bureaucratic-like instructions were established, that made it possible to construct networks and information circuits. In this manner, journalists could access information and have the facts be known inside established frameworks, with no risks for the informants or the radio station.

“For us as a radio it was a problem to receive a woman who, crying and anguished, told us her husband had been



abducted by the CNI. Those were real pleas. That kind of situation was almost an unsolvable problem for us. For one part we did not have the means to investigate what had happened, and for the other, that woman could have been sent by the secret service with the intent of having the radio broadcast false information. That is to say a trap”<sup>36</sup>.

On the other hand, because of its task *Cooperativa* had to assume the attacks and severities of a media of the opposition. The authorities applied diverse exclusion policies, like denial of permits to assist to news conferences of the government – where Pinochet or the authority in question gave his version of the facts – or to delegations that accompanied official tours. However, the biggest problem was represented by their colleagues who supported the regime. Most of them considered their survival to be dependent on the dictatorship, working for both spaces at the same time: for the media and for the government. It was not hard to find a journalist from some newspaper working as an advisor for the Home Secretary, or some media as a branch of the *Ministerio de Secretaría General de Gobierno*<sup>37</sup>. It was they, the colleagues, who made sure to guard and restrict information from radio *Cooperativa*.

As a precautionary measure, authorities designed the guidelines of questions beforehand, in such a way that they only focus on the works and projects of the regime. This meant designing communicational strategies from codes that broke down the informative fence, and in which the news came directly out of the authority’s mouth. These strategies consisted in formulating questions as open as possible, without giving specific data.

“Journalist: Minister, has the government taken measures to avoid disorder on the day of the protest?

Minister: Well, tomorrow there will be a large police deployment in the streets.

<sup>36</sup> Arismendi, *op. cit.*, 27.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 30.

Press report: The Minister informed that tomorrow there will be a large police deployment, faced with the calls for national protest”<sup>38</sup>.

In this way, the radio station gave the necessary information, but made it possible to have a different interpretation, from which the listeners could deduce the places of meeting for the protest, as well as warnings for the organizers and participants in the protests. In this manner, the discourses that constituted the informative dialectic of neutrality generated a political identity of opposition inside the discourse of the radio station.

In 1985 market studies showed that Radio *Cooperativa* was the radio station with the most listeners in the country, more than Radio *Portales*<sup>39</sup>. This rotund success, which started since 1983, was not only because of what was said, but also how it was done: forms and concepts that added up a journalistic package in which voice, professionalism, presentation of the information, etc, played a role. All the essentials to make the radio station attractive, different and “believable”.

#### BETWEEN NAUTICAL TACTICS AND CONSENSUS: THE POLITICAL CONSTITUTION OF 1980, NATIONAL PROTESTS AND CLOSURES

Between 1981 and 1982 one of the biggest crises of the military regime began, driven by economic and political factors that made it possible to change and diversify the forms of opposition. This, because of the reorganization of the public space, the moral monopoly the opposition started to manifest concerning the issue of human rights and the recovery of political activity in some cultural institutions like institutes and educational spaces. In this context, the media of the opposition performed a mainly political function.

Information was ordered according to the position the “politics of words” were expressed in, so as to

construct identities and feed competitive strategies in the field of the opposition<sup>40</sup>. Denunciations acquired an important role again, especially regarding human rights, and became more public, with a larger impact. However, this political act of the media lacked a center of reunion and clear planning; they were more of “tactics”, that is to say “marginal interventions inside circuits that depend on basic a prior conditions to operate, like autonomy and the organization of central institutions that affect each circuit”<sup>41</sup>. This was the case of Cooperativa.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Guillermo Muñoz, press editor of the radio. In Arismendi, *op. cit.*, 46.

<sup>39</sup> Stern, *op. cit.*, 303.

<sup>40</sup> José Joaquín Brunner, *Un espejo trizado. Ensayos sobre cultura y políticas culturales*, Santiago, FLACSO, 1988, 127-128.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, 129.

With the change of formats and styles, the radio station consolidated itself as a believable media and secured a position of autonomy of political parties. In this way the radio took responsibility for itself and its news programs. Although the news revolved around social tensions and the politics of the 80s, Cooperativa showed an ambiguous position towards the authorities, which made it possible for it to remain in the media market. In other words, it adopted – in accordance to the circumstances – two positions: the “nautical” one and the one of consensus. The first referred to the mechanisms of self censorship applied by the directors of the radio when they saw that the coverage of certain events could put the radio at risk. This implied to silence certain facts and adopt a more ambiguous stand once they saw the results of some news programs. A memorable case was the coverage of the plebiscite of the constitution of 1980. For another part, the politics of consensus implied to negotiate with the authorities beforehand on how to transmit certain news programs to protect the continuity of the media.

#### *The Constitution of 1980: from opposition to the “nautical” tactic*

On August 11th 1980 the media announced the call to plebiscite to approve the Constitution written by collaborators of the military regime. From that minute on, the statements, comments and declarations from different social groups did not stop. More than informing about that news, Cooperativa constructed a campaign of rejection, implicitly calling out to vote NO in the plebiscite. The campaign was presided by the then director of the radio, Genaro Arriagada, and several members of the Christian Democratic Party, the directors, and all other members (journalists, clerks, collaborators, etc) participated<sup>42</sup>. So, the news programs were inclined to emit opinions and news contrary to the enactment of the constitution, which did not mean that the news about the government disappeared. In this manner, through news programs, the radio validated all social actors of the moment.

“I consider the announcement by general Pinochet, to submit the constitution to plebiscite, to be an insult and provocation to all Chileans. A sham and fraud is intended (declaration by Andrés Zaldívar. Emission of August 12th 1980). The *Agrupación Cultural Universitaria* (Cultural University Association, ACU) called out to all university students of the country to discuss and elaborate a unified position towards the plebiscite of September 11<sup>th</sup> (Emission of August 18<sup>th</sup> 1980). The group of 10 publicly called out to all sectors, for the constitution of a command for the restitution of democracy” (Emission of August 19<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>42</sup> “I was chief of that minuscule campaign. Many radio executives and directors actively participated against the Constitution approved by Pinochet. After the triumph of the government, I told the press editor and manager to lay down the periscope and submerge...”. *Ibidem*, 45.

“The Farmers and Natives Federation of Agricultural Trade Unions of the province of Santiago stated that the calling to the plebiscite by general Pinochet is a violation of the Chilean people (Emission of August 20<sup>th</sup> 1980). The Democratic Student Councils of Universidad Católica pointed out that the plebiscite was a political and moral

indignity (Emission of August 21<sup>st</sup> 1980). The rector of Universidad de Chile suspended a forum about the plebiscite and the constitution programmed by the Student Council of Sciences that was to be held in Campus Macul (Emission of August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1980). The **auxiliary** bishop of Santiago, Monsignor Jorge Houston, pointed out that the thesis exposed by professors of Law from Universidad Católica that to support the government plebiscite is contrary to the teachings of the Church. (Emisión of September 4<sup>th</sup> 1980). 54 persons were detained for participating in manifestations against the plebiscite in the center of Santiago. At this moment the number of detainees by police amounts to 54; 45 men, one minor and 8 women. Many people supported the protesters, clapping and calling in out one voice NO-NO-NO” (Emission of September 9<sup>th</sup> 1980)<sup>43</sup>.

All sectors of the opposition were covered by news transmissions, through their own comments, arguments, denunciations of intimidations, detentions for calling out to vote NO, street comments, etc, which implied the position of the radio station. The discourse of political objectivity adopted as principle by Cooperativa was left behind. However, after the approval of the constitution, the radio station submerged immediately into silence, angering the collaborators of the radio, who thought it was time to go on with the campaign of political opposition. They argued that otherwise this campaign would just have been an ephemeral act of heroism that moved the country for a week. Genaro Arraigada intervened in this conflict, ordering to put down the periscope,

“You are the journalists, but I am the political conductor of this, and consequently my instruction was to put down the periscope”. (...) “In fact, we submerged ourselves, and during the week of the discussion Andrés Zaldívar, president of the Christian Democratic Party, was expelled from the country. Well, the journalists came and acknowledged their mistake of political diagnosis and we considered the subject to be closed”<sup>44</sup>.

#### *Between protests and closures: the tactics of consensus*

The economic crisis of 1983, a consequence of the neoliberal policies, and the resulting impoverishment of several social sectors put the new order – implemented in 1977 and ratified with the constitution of 1980 – in check. Social unrest was felt in all social sectors, not only in the poor ones. There were several consecutive waves of protests that ended up arousing violence and repression by the authorities. One of the most affected sectors was, again, the media, that were closed and intervened for longer periods of time. They were accused of being responsible for encouraging the masses and lay the foundations for the fall of the government<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> All emissions about the constitution of 1980 are in the press registers of Vicaría de la Solidaridad. AVSCH, Anuario de Prensa, 1980. “Sobre el plebiscito: 9 de agosto al 23 de Octubre”.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, 45.

The crisis in the new order of the regime helped the media take advantage of the fissures and throw all their discursive artillery towards the public sphere:

“The media became daring and we, who came from a delicate period, joined... In economic terms everyone gets into the fight. The government was in a very weak position. That is why the protests of 1983 began. The country confirmed that there were serious problems in the conduction. A Secretary of Treasury that flushed the toilet on the private banks. Here we forget that even the superintendent of banks was detained, etc., etc. In this situation one dared to do anything. So there we became bolder”<sup>46</sup>.

So, the role of mediator turned the radio and other media into social actors – except for television and newspapers – as the informative discourses they emitted showed the suffering of a mutilated and repressed community. In this manner, the media made a dissident memory visible, which activated the idea of “the defeated”, a memory that many did not want to see and that had been silenced by the authorities.

On May 11<sup>th</sup> 1983, Luis Ajenjo, general manager of the radio station, encountered, on his way to work, a manifestation on Flemming Street, in Las Condes. He immediately started a live transmission, with the help of the protesters themselves. The other journalists went to other points of the city where other demonstrations were triggered. It was then, Ajenjo remembers, that Sergio Campos was established as the voice of

Cooperativa. That first transmission increased the audience significantly. Telephones did not stop ringing, establishing a direct relationship with the listeners, that supplied the lack of personnel at the radio. Four days later came the first closure, under the order of the Minister of the General Secretary of Government, Ramón Suárez<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Between 1983 and 1984 several media were closed, both written media and radio stations. Among the most relevant cases was the closure of *Apsi* magazine (December 1982), *Análisis* magazine (September 1983), that included a prison sentence for its director, Juan Cárdenas, and of the radios Cooperativa (May 1983 and September 1984) and Chilena (September 1984). There were also closures of regional and neighborhood radio stations. Stern, *op. cit.*, 298-308.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, 49.

<sup>47</sup> The coverage of the protests of 1983 turned Cooperativa into the leader of *ratings*. Besides, it had more credibility than newspapers and magazines, located in the 41% of the most believable media of the moment. Stern, *op. cit.*, 303.

According to the members of Cooperativa, the demonstrations in the higher middle class neighborhoods of the city (like Las Condes, La Reina, Ñuñoa and Lo Barnechea) were key in the denouement of the other demonstrations. In our opinion, this shows the national discontent among all members of society, but it can be very risky to place all responsibility of the protests on only one social sector and deny the role that - since the coup - popular sectors, political associations and trade unions fulfilled. However, this vision of Cooperativa can also be interpreted as a way to call out to the potential audience among the masses. About the first protest, Genaro Arriagada points out: “Although Seguel summoned them, we saw the movement in the upper class neighborhood. In the second manifestation, the poor sectors joined. The official sectors warned that that could cause the fall of the regime. Almost all the media had gone to the first protests, but after this warning they quickly took off”<sup>48</sup>.

The news coverage of the manifestations cost the radio station a high prize: the closure of 1983 had a double significance. From a commercial point of view the advertisers – that in their majority were renegotiating the debts caused by the recession – did not want to invest in a media that did not offer guarantees because of the rejection by the authorities. On the other hand, the transmissions of the protests made the radio the most believable media for the listeners. The increment of audience was notorious, and surpassed that of Radio Portales. Letters, phone calls, insertions in written media showed the national support to the work of the radio journalists. Cooperativa had become “the official radio of the protests”, even though they deny that title up to this day.

“Dear Director: In Chile of today nothing can surprise us, but it can outrage us. I know it will be of no or little use to demonstrate, as one of many housewives, my absolute solidarity and complete support to the selfless workers of Radio Cooperativa that was silenced just hours before the celebration of the DAY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS. What sarcasm! Many of us desire peace, tranquility and above all true justice for Chile and no more arbitrariness and absurd repressions, as is happening at the moment”<sup>49</sup>.

The letters of support consolidates the national support to the radio station’s work. They show that the radio settled in the memory of people, with the formats and styles of communication and journalistic information, reaffirming and reconstructing the notion of community among the listeners. Cooperativa intervened directly in daily life, becoming part of their lives.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*. 49.

<sup>49</sup> L.G.C. “Adhesión a Cooperativa”, *Hoy*, Santiago, Cartas al Lector, June 8 to 14 1983, 70.

“Dear Director:

“(…) Since then I listen to that radio, in the morning from 7 AM until it ends, then in my house or car, so it is the radio my sons, daughters in law, etc, listen to. I do not change it for another; because of its music, the voice of its newsreaders,

the news that is up to the minute and from the place itself,

the completeness of *Diario de Cooperativa*, the objectivity of its information, etc.<sup>50</sup> .

When it was closed, the radio station received about three thousand letters and messages of support. This corroborates that the purpose set up since the eighties – when styles and formats were changed under direction of Genaro Arriagada – had had positive effects for the station. *Cooperativa* had become the radio of “all Chileans”. The National Congress of Communications of 1985, in Viña del Mar, reinforced this situation. In the conferences – with participation of diverse activists, communicators, politicians of all opposition parties and students – new policies of social communication were discussed and both in group works and quantitative analyses it was understood that *Cooperativa* was the only radio station all participants identified with, the only radio “that says truth in an objective manner”, “that shed light on everything that goes on”<sup>51</sup> .

The decrees of closure of the media emitted by the regime were faced both with juridical strategy and acts of denunciation through the media themselves. There were committees of defense of the radio, integrated by professional and artistic celebrities. Legal measures made it possible to counteract the censorship, and sometimes dialogues between the government and the high directives of the media led to provisional agreements about lifting the closures before the ruling, or consensus about the information that they could emit from then on. These mechanisms were justified by the fact that “to them (the military) it was not advisable to have a ruling of the tribunals declare that they did not have the faculty to close down the radio station; much less in the case of a preventive closure”<sup>52</sup> .

Carlos Figueroa recalls: “One of the cases I remember was with Márquez de la Plata. We talked about the closure; it would last until Saturday, for instance. You – he said – desist of the appeal on Monday. Of course, that is how we negotiated”<sup>53</sup> . This way of relating was a result of the networks that existed before the coup, added to the own dynamics of relationships with the members of the government.

<sup>50</sup> María Gallardo R. “Radio Cooperativa”, *Hoy Magazine*, Santiago, Cartas al Lector, May 25 to 31 1983, 65.

<sup>51</sup> *Comunicación Hoy y Futuro*. Actas del III Seminario Nacional de Comunicaciones. Organizan: Colegio de Periodistas de Chile, TIAC, ICECOOP, CENECA, CED, CEDAL, ECO, ILET, IPS, INPRODE, Centros de Alumnos de la Escuela de Periodismo de la Universidad de Chile y la Pontificia Universidad Católica. August-November 1985.

<sup>52</sup> Arismendi, *op. cit.*, 50.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, 52.

Part of the consensus policies initiated between the media and the regime – to avoid the risks of being definitely closed down – was the reduction of the news programs, as they were considered to be a vehicle that encouraged the masses to go on fighting for their rights. After all, as Márquez de la Plata said: “A manifestation without a radio was no manifestation”<sup>54</sup> .

Inside the radio station these decisions caused tensions among the members. The journalists considered that the station had to fight directly with the regime and not make pacts with it; however the decisions of the directors showed that the purpose of the radio was a different one. For the latter, every closure was seen as a defeat, because while they knew the rules of the game and all the arbitrariness, they risked the sender and stigmatized it as a political radio. In turn, the political parties of the opposition also confronted the radio station. The parties of the left considered that the precautionary measures of the radio meant that *Cooperativa* was not responding to its fundamental ethical (and political) function: to inform.

“...they called us cowards, simply because when the manifestations did not have a big effect anymore we informed the way they were. An anecdote. One time in a reunion of the Socialist Party the criticism about us abounded. There, I know because Ángel Flisflisch was there, the idea of some leaders prevailed that we at the radio had the right to judge the work of the radio from our houses. That was the argument”<sup>55</sup> .

In 1986 the radio did a survey to get to know the feeling of the public opinion about the state of siege and the protests. The results surprised the members of the radio station and the groups of the opposition: “people are tired of the protests...”<sup>56</sup> . The poll showed that people had enough of all the repression, the raids at sunrise in poor areas, and the violence that left victims in all sectors. Faced with these results, and following the central postulate of its programming – to inform – *Cooperativa* communicated this news and received all artillery of the leaders of the political left. When it made this national weariness of violence known, the radio

broke up the strategies of the political parties to counteract the government of Pinochet, and showed the incongruence between these practices of resistance and public opinion.

“Of course. Protesting in the upper class neighborhood was more comfortable, though still dangerous. But after all no one got you out naked at five in the morning to form you on a square out in the open. I believe that was a sign of independence of the station from the political structures. It was also our commitment to the public, Ajenjo points out”<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, 52

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, 53.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, 58.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

In this way, Cooperativa established its place as an autonomous media inside the opposition; insofar it did not compromise itself organically with the social movement articulated by political groups in the eighties. However, this autonomy does not mean that the radio was only located in the space of “entertainment”, since they manifested a clear (though not organic) compromise with the political directives that lead the process of re-democratization, and above all with the imperative of their position as mediators between the facts and public opinion: it is the task of the radio to inform.

## CONCLUSION

During the dictatorship, Radio Cooperativa and other media of the opposition created an image of Other Nation from the memories dissident to the dictatorship. In them the masses recognized their demands, experiences and ways of expression; with this a shared cultural identity, different from that of the military regime, was consolidated. This was largely possible because the radio station had a discourse that was autonomous from partisan politics, exposing events in such a way that they caused an effect of reality shared by all members of Chilean society that identified with the radio’s discourse. For this, it had certain technological advantages that made it possible to surpass the socio cultural prejudices of certain groups, and was able to establish itself as the most believable and massive media of the time. The news discourse of Cooperativa was consolidated as a national discourse that, though it was not aimed at “all Chileans”, was accepted at least by a large part of the community, even by those who did not necessarily identify with it.

The informative discourse of the radio was mediated by several factors, typical of the hegemonic game of that moment; the relationship of the radio station with the political party, internal relationships between directors and subordinates, the relationship with the market and authorities were the elements that set and determined the road to follow. In this manner, it is complex to try to establish the responsibility of the media during the dictatorship, since - as exposed in this work - the representations of Cooperativa always depended on basic and prior conditions that affected the circulation of information. Besides, the reception of the messages emitted by the radio always ultimately depended on the interpretation that the listeners made of what the radio intended to communicate.

Translated by Cristina Labarca Cortés

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