

ARTURO NAVARRO, editor/Publisher, cultural administrador

I began working as an editor with Quimantú, the national publishing house created by Allende's government during the time of the Popular Unity. My first job there was creator and [director-publisher](#) of a collection of children's stories called "~~The Cuncuna Collection.~~" [\(Caterpillar\)](#) I always say that they gave me that job because I was the most childlike person at the publishing house. I was twenty one. There had never been children's books published in Chile, so this collection would be a first, but not necessarily limited to Chilean authors. The point was that children's books would be published here for the first time. That was my work during the three years of Allende's government.

Immediately after the coup, I continued in that line with our competitor in the market of children's books, the Lord Cochran [Publishing Company](#). There I met Isabel Allende and worked with her until she left Chile. She put me in charge of developing projects of children's books. At that time she was not the well-known and famous person she is today. After Isabel left Lord Cochran [e](#), children's publications dwindled.

So at the end of 1974 I started working at the [Pro-For](#) Peace Committee with José Zalaquett, on the subject of information. When the Peace Committee was closed down a year later, I went to work for its successor, the Vicariate of Solidarity. There I founded *The Solidarity Bulletin*, whose publication was possible only because of the direct and paternal supervision of the Catholic Church, particularly of the Vicar, Cristián Precht, and especially Cardinal Raúl Silva [Henríquez](#). They gave us the good fortune of a protective umbrella, which allowed us to publish examples of human rights violations.

While I was with the Vicariate, a group of journalists, some of whom were carried over from the Peace Committee, as I was, others who came from international [work,work](#) put together a project of publishing an international affairs magazine. The authorities of the Catholic Church had offered the people who worked at the Peace Committee the possibility of presenting projects

to Church organizations or international solidarity organizations. One of the organizations we presented our project to was a Belgian NGO, Entraide & Fraternité, which approved it. And the first issue of *Apsi*, with 16 black and white pages, appeared on June 30, 1976.

It was the time of Carter's campaign, and I remember that the headline "CARTER AND BREZINSKI" was on the cover of that first issue. I was its editor, at the age of 25, with great support from two international journalists and friends who knew much more than I did: Rafael Otano, a Spaniard, who worked at *Apsi* until ~~1976~~¹⁹⁷⁶; and John Dinges, who was a correspondent for *The Washington Post* in Santiago at that time. They couldn't be directors of a Chilean magazine in Chile [Arturo: En un artículo de 2007 en Radio Terra, dice que "Rafael Otano, ex editor general de *Apsi*. Periodista y ex sacerdote nacido en España, critica la falta actual de pluralismo en Chile." ¿Cuándo fue editor general de la revista? Fue en dos períodos, el primero cuando yo era Director, luego, hacia el final.], so I worked directly with them and a group of Chilean and international sociologists and journalists.

The magazine was very successful, but we didn't have money to pay our contributors. Basically the only thing we could offer them was the privilege of being able to read *Le Monde* or *The Herald Tribune* or *The Economist*, to which we subscribed. They would come to our offices to read the international publications and look over international cables. Two international news agencies – IPS and AFP – donated their international wires to us after a few days. They didn't have much interest in saving them, so instead of filing them away or throwing them out, they passed them on to us. *Apsi* became not only a magazine, which was what was seen, but a place of encounter, of reflection and discussion about international subjects. As a rule, the *Apsi* meetings were virtual seminars. What I know about international events I learned at those meetings, listening to our contributors, who became highly specialized in various areas of the globe. There was a time, for example, when we had a contributor whose specialty was only the Horn of Africa

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[Fernando Bustamante Ponce, sociólogo ecuatoriano que más tarde fue Ministro del Interior de su país](#)). I think that very few magazines in the world have that luxury.

A large number of our contributors later became ambassadors under Aylwin's government. We worked with Eduardo Ortíz, who became ambassador to India; we worked with Heraldo Muñoz, who became ambassador to Brazil and to the OAS [Muñoz is currently Chile's ambassador to the United Nations]; Carlos Portales was ambassador to Mexico.

The magazine was financed through subscriptions, but there was practically no funding for salaries. I continued living on my salary from the Vicariate of Solidarity as director of *The Solidarity Bulletin*. It was a good compliment, not only economically. *The Solidarity Bulletin* allowed me access to and knowledge of the Chilean reality. And *Apsi* allowed me knowledge and proximity to the international reality. I always said that if we could have joined the two we would have an excellent magazine, but conditions did not allow that. They reached two very different worlds -- *The Solidarity Bulletin* through organisms of the Church: grassroots communities, parishes, etc., and *Apsi* through subscriptions -- and it was not in the best interest of the authorities of the regime that they merge.

When *Apsi* began in 1976, *a priori* censorship existed in Chile. It consisted of an annoying process of having to ask permission to publish a magazine. We sent a letter to DINACOS (Dirección Nacional de Comunicación Social/National Office of Social Communication), headed by Colonel Zúñiga Zabala, applying for that authorization, presenting our names as an endorsement of the application. We held back the extent of the coverage the magazine would have, saying that it was only for information about international affairs and the international economy.

After a prudent amount of time, they responded "yes," we would have authorization to publish the bulletin, which was to be called *International Current Events*, and that before printing the first issue we had to submit the typewritten articles to the authorities. With that

permission we proceeded to develop the first issue, the one with “CARTER AND BREZINSKI” on the cover. We sent the articles to DINACOS, and after a few days we received authorization to print them. At our own risk we sent the articles to the printer, because we still didn’t have the authorization for circulation. Once we printed the articles we had to send them to DINACOS again, in the original and in the printed versions, so that they could verify that we had printed what they had already authorized. Once that was confirmed, they gave us a circulation permit.

We had to perform that exercise -- request the permit to print and the permit to circulate - for the first several issues of the magazine. Then they gave us a permit of free printing, and we only had to present a request for free circulation. Finally, after a rather prolonged period of time, they authorized us the right to circulate without having to request that prior permit. It was at a time when the country was beginning to talk about self-censorship. They called us and said that after so much time of *a priori* censorship, they had decided that we would be able to censor ourselves. That must have been around 1977.

So we were free to apply our own criteria of self-censorship, of course under the strict vigilance of the people of DINACOS. Every once in a while I was summoned to DINACOS at the Diego Portales Building, where the government had its offices. There was a sociologist in charge of our magazine whose name was Miguel Angel Garmendia. His demeanor was absolutely casual. He had a beard, smoked a pipe, and wore a leather jacket, almost a caricature of a sociologist. And among his duties was to study our magazine. The times he summoned me, he had complete collections, perfectly underlined, analyzed, which he had no qualms about showing me, perhaps as part of the game, to show me that he was there reading and controlling. He would give me advice such as, “This article where you talk about Brazil... seems to refer to Chile. It sounds a lot like Chile. This kind of thing is not good.” He had us look at areas where we should be careful, but saying that it wasn’t censorship.

Finally, I wouldn't call it a friendship, but a certain relationship was established, and he became much more explicit. I was summoned once a month for an interview. Gradually he would say to me, "Look, you can say anything you want here -- except about the Pinochet family." In other words, that was the criterion. "You can say anything you want about what's happening outside of Chile." He was setting the boundaries. I think that the fruit of those conversations was to learn the boundaries. I knew exactly what I could publish and what I could not publish. He was giving me guidelines for my criteria of self-censorship. That situation lasted until we began to publish information about Chile, each time in greater proportions, but in a very cautious way, each time assessing the situation. The country was beginning to open up, in 1979, 1980. Then suddenly in 1981, on August 7, I was summoned again to the offices of Mr. Garmendia.

It was a Friday. I got the call at four or five in the afternoon. He said, "Arturo, please come in." I remember the date because it was my mother's birthday. I answered, "I can't because today is my mother's birthday, and I have to go to her house soon." He said, "Arturo, come in to the office." So I understood that this was something more urgent. I arrived at Garmendia's office, and he said to me, "Accompany me to my boss's office." We went up to another floor of the Diego Portales Building to the office of Jorge Fernández, a civilian and the director of DINACOS at that time. (He later became general secretary of Channel 13 and a member of UDI.) It was a very large office, in semi-shadow. Mr. Fernández was standing beside a Chilean flag and below a portrait of the four members of the *Junta*. He said to me, "This is as far as it goes. You cannot continue publishing. This magazine does not have authorization to publish national news, so as of right now you will go back to publishing only international news. If not, you cannot appear at all." I said, "Unfortunately today is a Friday at six o'clock in the afternoon. The issue that will appear on Tuesday is already [printed](#); I cannot stop it from circulating. What you are asking is impossible for us. We started to publish national news because of the

market. As a bulletin of international affairs only, we do not cover all of our market. We had only five hundred subscribers in all of Chile, and that does not finance any magazine. Our introduction of national topics has a tight relationship with the subsistence of the magazine. If you tell me to return to international topics only, it is the same as telling me to close the magazine because it would be unsustainable economically.” “I don’t know,” he told me, “but you do not have a permit so you cannot continue circulating.”

The interview ended, and I have an image of that moment. I left the Diego Portales Building, and for the first time I suddenly had the sensation of seeing everything blank, like when you erase a cassette or a disk, suddenly I saw a blank, and I said, “Well, we’ve come to the point of going under.” I immediately went to talk to the people of the magazine and with Jorge Molina [Valdivieso](#), our lawyer at the magazine, and we decided to present a *Recurso de Protección* [Protection Appeal], saying that we had received a threat that would force us to close the magazine. In the meantime, I received a message indirectly, through a common friend, from the Minister of the Interior, Sergio Fernández, who sent a clear message to me that if I published the magazine again they would throw me out of the country, a threat which was inadmissible because he didn’t tell me directly. He said it to a third party, and that person transmitted the message to me. So the situation was complex, and very personally directed toward me. It was presumed, and correctly so, that because it was a very modest magazine with very few financial resources, targeting the editor was an incisive blow to the publication.

We filed a lawsuit and presented several appeals to the courts, where we alleged to having been threatened by Jorge Fernández, the director of DINACOS. He, of course, made an official declaration saying that he had never said that, that he had invited me practically to have tea with him like a good friend. The trial ended with the Justice Department saying, “No one has been threatened here. When they threaten you, come back.” I didn’t want to continue making obstacles for the publication of the magazine, so I dropped the charges, which I could not

Comentado [b1]: Ahora , Centro Cultural Gabriela Mistral, por iniciativa de la Presidenta Michelle Bachelet en 2006. Curiosamente, ella me designo Coordinador Interministerial del proyecto, cargo que ejercí entre febrero de 2008 y octubre de 2009. Mi misión consistió en crear la Corporación Cultural que lo gestionará. Actualmente, formo parte de l Directorio de dicha corporación representando a la Corporación Cultural de la Estación Mapocho.

Comentado [b2]: En esos tiempos, la expulsión de dirigentes opositores del país ers frecuente. De hecho, pocos días antes de la clausura de Apsi habían sido expulsados Orlando Cantuarias y otros dirigentes.

challenge for personal reasons: first, I did not want to be thrown out of the country; secondly, I was just beginning a second marriage, and Patricia, my wife, was expecting a baby. Besides, I had two children from my first marriage ~~whom~~that I could not take with me if I left.

I solved it simply by leaving the magazine in November of 1981, turning it over to the rest of the team to see if they could resolve the problem. It did not appear again until all of the long judicial processes had ended and were resolved. In May 1982 the magazine began to reappear, little by little, with only international material. Later it grew until... the rest is more or less well-known.¹

Once the *Apsi* chapter closed for me, I received many demonstrations of solidarity. But there was one that was very concrete, from a businessman, Julio Poblete, which was very meaningful to me. I had known him only as a colleague at meetings of the National Press Association, where the editors of print material would meet. Essentially, Julio's business was publishing women's magazines, the whole line of the De Armas group²: *Vanidades*, Ideas, *Buenhogar*, ~~*Ideas*, which are~~ versions of North American magazines ~~like~~ *Good Housekeeping*, Harpers Bazaar, The Ring, Mecánica Popular, etc. He was one of the first people I called to explain my situation and ask for advice about looking for work. Without thinking twice, he asked me a question: "Do you know how to add?" "Well...", I said, "yes. It's not my specialty, but yes." "Then come talk to me." He offered me a job, which in a way marked the beginning of a new career.

He hired me immediately to be in charge of circulation and marketing for his magazines. He had a successful, flourishing business, based primarily on the sale of ads. The magazines were sold at newsstands, but the money generated through circulation was marginal. So he decided to create a separate department for selling ads and put me in charge. Apart from having a

¹ See *Historia de la revista Apsi: el que se ríe se va al cuartel (pico para Pinochet)* by Francisca Araya Cofré, Santiago: LOM, 2007.

² Creado por el empresario venezolano Armando De Armas, con sede en Miami. Julio Poblete era socio minoritario de De Armas y Gerente General de la filial chilena llamada Editorial Andina.

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job, that position allowed me to become familiar with an area that was complimentary to my experience as an editor. It was a matter of going from the journalistic side to the commercial side and initiating a training process for everything that had to do with merchandising and distributing magazines. While I was there I was also able to do some writing.

I had the opportunity, for example, of working for an NGO called CENECA³ for which I wrote a report on “The System of the Press under the Military Government (1973-1986).”⁴ It’s a study along the lines of what Armand Mattelart did during Allende’s time, on the system of the press: who were the owners of the media, what groups were functioning, etc.

While I was working for Julio Poblete at ~~his publishing house~~, Editorial Andina, some Colombian businessmen⁵ arrived from a publisher called Oveja Negra, which at that time was publishing Gabriel García Márquez. Oveja Negra was entering a larger market with first collections of books that had massive circulation at newsstands, very similar to Quimantú, which was also a massive circulation of books sold at newsstands. They had a collection of a hundred titles called “Best Sellers,” which appeared weekly. They had very attractive titles, like *Jaws* and *Exodus* (many of them had been made into movies), and the collection had a very strong cover design. Editorial Andina was named Oveja Negra’s representative in Chile. And Julio Poblete put me in charge of launching the collection here. It was very good for me. I established a cordial

³ CENECA was founded in Santiago as a non-profit corporation in 1977 by individuals formerly associated with the School of the Arts of Communication (EAC) of the Catholic University. Many of its members continued to work for a time with the School of Theatre of the Catholic University after the EAC was closed, making CENECA the only private institute with personnel still affiliated with the University. Its purpose was to study popular culture in Chile (and to explore the concept of “popular”) as well as to provide support for popular cultural activities such as street theatre, *peñas folklóricas*, etc. Researchers affiliated with CENECA produced a variety of studies, focusing on topics ranging from the legal framework governing the operation of the major media (press, radio, television), to semiological analyses of the discourses of authoritarianism, the techniques for training people from the poor of “popular” classes in the active reception of media, especially television, messages. (See *International Political Economy and Mass Communication in Chile: National Intellectuals and Transnational Hegemony* (International Political Economy Series) by Matt Davies, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999

⁴ Publicado parcialmente en “La Prensa: desde el autoritarismo a la libertad”, Claudio Durán, Fernando Reyes Matta y Carlos Ruiz editores. CERC-ILET con el auspicio de Atkinson College, York University, Canadá. Santiago de Chile, 1989. Una versión completa en Documento de Trabajo N° 59 de CENECA.

⁵ José Vicente Katarain, originalmente socio de Gabriel García Márquez, uno de los creadores de Oveja Negra.

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relationship with the people of Oveja Negra, and the launching of its “Best Sellers” collection was a huge success.

After we launched several other collections -Grandes Aventuras, Maestros de la Literatura Universal- for them, Oveja Negra decided to open a branch here, independent from Editorial Andina, and offered me a job with it. So I left Editorial Andina and became Oveja Negra’s representative in Chile. But once we had come to an agreement, a problem arose, which I couldn’t pinpoint at that time. They stopped all contact with me. It was very disconcerting because I was renting a space that was to be its offices, its storage space, and a book store. I had quit my job to work for them, and suddenly these people disappeared.

Later I learned the reasons for the estrangement, reasons that could not be expressed by telephone (which was the relation I had by them) or by cable. It was that Oveja Negra had bought the rights to a book by García Márquez called *La aventura de Miguel Littín clandestino en Chile* [The Adventure of Miguel Littín Underground in Chile]. They assumed that the Chilean dictatorship would be offended by the book and that the first person who would suffer the consequences would be their representative in Chile. So their desire for not getting involved in any trouble and for protecting me prompted them to cut relations with me, but they never explained it to me. That put me in the very strange situation of having no relationship with Oveja Negra, but having books of theirs here. I participated in book fairs as their representative, everyone in Chile knew me as their representative. But the time came when I had to revert to other work.

I took on the representation of some Venezuelan books published by Editorial Nueva Sociedad. And I founded my own publishing house here in Chile, Editorial Melquiades, taking a name from García Márquez. Melquiades was the gypsy in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* who brought the light, who brought the ice, who brought the discoveries, who brought civilization. I created the publishing house with a friend of mine who had just arrived from Colombia and was

also a big fan of García Márquez, and we liked that name. We started by publishing basically two kinds of things: one we called “The Publishing Services of Melquiades,” where we offered editorial services to foundations or to people who financed books. And with the money we made from that, we published books by Chilean writers, specializing in the “Sixties Generation,” like Ariel Dorfman, Antonio Skármeta, Luís Domínguez. And I was able to close the Oveja Negra chapter.

Then someone decided that the problem of the book about Littín was not so serious and sent me several copies, so the relationship with Oveja Negra was restored. They sent me García Márquez’s next book *El amor en el tiempo del cólera* [Love in the Time of Cholera], which we sold with great success here in Chile.

Sometime later, Oveja Negra decided, without consulting me, to send me 15,000 copies of García Márquez’s book about Littín. By that time I had read the book and found it to be very imprecise. I think that between Miguel’s large imagination and García Márquez’s large imagination, they constructed a very nice story but in many aspects very different from reality. I felt it was a book without distinction and would never sell in Chile. Besides, the magazine *Análisis* had serialized the book, so the audience who was really interested in it had already read it. Nevertheless, Oveja Negra decided to send me 15,000 copies by ship. And I entered another big mess. This was in 1986.

I had just returned from a trip. When I arrived home, the customs agent was waiting for me to say, “Arturo, there’s a very serious problem. They’ve called me from customs in Valparaíso to say that there are 15,000 books for you who have been seized, and they’re going to be burned.” I left immediately for Valparaíso with the same ingenuousness with which I confronted the courts with the *Apsi* situation. I went to the First Naval Zone in Valparaíso to see what was happening and made the mistake of identifying myself with my own name. They took me to the Navy building. “Why are you here?” “I’m the Chilean representative of this publisher,

and I have been told that these books have been seized.” An officer took me to the office of a Lieutenant Vega, who took down all of my information before starting to speak to me: “What is your name? Where do you live?” Then he said, “How can I help you?” Chilean Navy people are very courteous. I said, “Look, I’m so and so. I represent such and such publishing house. They sent some books to me, and my customs agent tells me that they have been seized. That seems incredible to me. And he tells me something worse: that you’re going to burn them.” “Just a moment,” he said. He picks up the telephone, dials, talks to someone, apparently from a law department, hangs up the telephone and says, “Mr. Navarro, don’t worry, we’ve already burned them.” I couldn’t understand. I remember that I left, seeing everything in blank again. I was so upset that I didn’t even get my ID card back from the guard. I had to renew my card later because I didn’t want to go back for it.

I went to have a drink at nearby restaurant owned by a friend of mine. “Give me a strong one, please, because I just had a pretty strong experience.” Then I asked him where the nearest telex office was. I went to the one in downtown Valparaíso and sent a telex to Colombia to tell them what had happened. (The trial came later. I can’t say that it was a judicial trial but yes, a diplomatic one.) I went to the Colombian consulate and found that the books had not yet been burned.⁶ The consulate had made several gestures because Oveja Negra had asked that they not be burned, but re-exported. They said they had sent them to Lima. But that was impossible.

I made informal inquiries through common friends with Admiral Hernán Rivera Calderón, Chief of the Zone. He told the people at the consulate that it was the logical thing to do, that as we were in a state of siege, if they discovered drugs, if they discovered pornographic magazines, they were burned. So if they discovered a pernicious book, it would also be burned. There was no question about it. And so a few days later, as recorded in documents I have kept,

⁶ [El Cónsul colombiano, Libardo Buitrago Camelo, fue muy diligente y eficiente en obtener informaciones oficiales que a un chileno jamás las autoridades habrían dado, como por ejemplo, el Acta de Incineración de los libros. Actualmente, Buitrago reside en Chile y es un destacado comentarista internacional en radio y TV.](#)

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with written testimonies (because this country is very legalistic), it states, “In the presence of so-and-so and such-and-such officers of investigations, the books of such and such title have been incinerated...” And so they were burned.

They were burned in 1986, toward the end of the twentieth century in a country that claims to be civilized. There were headlines that went around the world. I have clippings from newspapers in the most remote languages. Because it was not only about burning 15,000 copies of a book; it was burning 15,000 copies of a book by García Márquez, a Nobel Prize winner.

The only thing I could think about was to spread the word in the most scandalous way possible. We organized a press conference with support from the Chilean Chamber of Books at the Chamber’s headquarters. And the incident was made known to the media.

The following year I was invited by Emilio Fillipi to join the team of a newly formed newspaper, *La Epoca*, in charge of the Sunday Supplement, a small-format magazine, in color. It did not have a staff of permanent contributors, but a core team of an editor and a journalist, who contracted articles out. People who wrote for *La Epoca* generally wrote under their own name. I remember articles with pseudonyms during the time of *Apsi*. Ricardo Lagos, for example, wrote for *Apsi* under a pseudonym because he was an international civil servant and could not write under his own name. I don’t remember that happening with *La Epoca*. From the beginning there was a daily column by a different writer. There was [Raúl Zurita](#), there was [Marco Antonio De la Parra](#), there were many, and under their own names.

It was a wonderful experience. Unfortunately it didn’t last very long because *La Epoca* did not have the economic success that was hoped for. One of the first things that had to be sacrificed was the beautiful and costly Sunday Supplement.

My last job for the paper was creating and editing the “Literature and Books” supplement, [con la Asesoría Literaria de Mariano Aguirre](#), the first of in any newspaper at that time. *El Mercurio* published a similar supplement later. I think it was the only time that *La*

Comentado [b3]: Además, cayeron en la hoguera un ciento de ejemplares de “La izquierda Latinoamerica” del autor venezolano Teodoro Petkof.

Epoca firsted *El Mercurio*. My editorial experience there served me well. I formed relationships with writers who were contributors to the supplement, and from that, a close contact with the literary world.⁷ At the time of the plebiscite, the idea of doing the book *Por Qué NO* ["Why NO" is a play on words. The title can also mean "Why NOT"] emerged from those relationships. I called on writers and asked them to explain why they supported the NO. I felt it was my contribution to the NO Campaign. The book was published in 1988 by the Comando Nacional por el NO.

After the plebiscite, toward the end of the military government, I joined Editorial Planeta, which coincidentally was in the same building as *La Epoca*. It was like the culmination of my career as an editor, because it was the most important publishing house in Chile. We published Diamela Eltit, and I was the first to publish [Alberto Fuguet](#). I was at Planeta when the dictatorship ended.

Speaking from the point of view of someone who stayed in Chile during the dictatorship, I think the contribution of journalism was much more important to the process than the visual arts or theatre or music or film. Journalists like Patricia Verdugo, Mónica González, [Patricia Politzer](#), [Maria Olivia Monckeberg](#), Juan Pablo Cárdenas -- ten or twenty journalists could be named who wrote books that were truly impressive about denouncements or disclosures... Magazines like *Apsi*, *The Solidarity Bulletin*, [Cauce](#) or *Análisis*, performed a very important role. I don't see something similar in the cultural world. I don't believe in the theory that times of persecution and hunger generate creativity. In Chile I think those were bad times for art, primarily because the official policy was so brutal in its treatment of artists. I do believe that the dictatorship was conscious of the fact that artists could cause a lot of harm. And they took great care and precaution to pass that message on with the torture and murder of Victor Jara, with two

⁷ Una versión detallada del trabajo en *Literatura y Libros* en Arturo Navarro "Un recuerdo clerical de Mariano Aguirre" en "LAS RAZONES DE UN LECTOR 20 años de crítica literaria" RIL editores, Santiago de Chile, 2010.

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or three other notable artists they used as examples, who were clearly stigmatized and brutally punished.

The dictatorship didn't have to do much. It only had to touch on certain things. Burning books, for example. That happened only once, in 1973, but they did it on camera for Channel 13, so everybody would see it. So they didn't need to burn more books. Everyone burned their own books. In that sense, they were very efficient. They dealt some very specific blows, which made the artistic and cultural worlds censor themselves, repress themselves. Parallel to that was the government's absolute ignoring of art and culture in economic terms. So with fear, and with zero money, artists were not in the best condition to create or develop any kind of movement or resistance or insubordination.⁸

I think the same about human rights. Everything that was created around the subject of human rights came from abroad. The Solidarity Museum, for example, came from foreign painters who donated works to the Vicariate of Solidarity or to the Year of Human Rights. There were very few exceptions of art in Chile at that time. The "Human Rights Cantata"⁹ is one of those exceptions of an artistic creation with some meaning under the dictatorship.

I've never been very active politically -- except for the plebiscite, where I directly assumed a role in my neighborhood, the commune of La Reina, as president of the [Partido por la Democracia \(PPD\)](#), when the party was formed at the end of 1987. Our concern was specifically the subject of the plebiscite and the subject of vigilance over the voting.

I continued to be active in the PPD and participated in programming the preparation of Aylwin's government. Immediately after he assumed office, I began to work with Ricardo Lagos in the Ministry of Education, primarily to create a book law. When I was working at the

⁸ Ver Arturo Navarro "Cultura ; quién paga? Gestión, Infraestructura y audiencias en el modelo chileno de desarrollo cultural" RIL editors, Santiago de Chile, 2006.

⁹ Written by Alejandro Guarello with lyrics by Esteban Gumucio, performed in 1978 by the Grupo Ortega and narrated by Roberto Parada.

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publishing houses, I became involved with the Chamber of Books¹⁰, and we began to formulate a project of a book law in the private sector. So when the democratic government began, and Ricardo Lagos asked me to be his advisor in cultural matters, I told him that I was very interested but that I wanted to concentrate on the subject of the book. The law was ratified in 1993, and it still exists.¹¹

The Book Law created a National Fund for Book and Reading Promotion and a National Council of the Book and Reading to administer those funds. It holds contests and reapportions the funds as prizes to published or non-published work by buying texts for libraries, supporting projects that support books and readings, and buying patrimonial books. In addition, there are ways of encouraging the exportation of books, reducing taxes for the publication of international ~~writers,writers~~: eliminating stock in bookstores after a certain amount of time has passed. The law protects the publishing industry and encourages exportation. It also favors projects that encourage reading. That was like a mission for me, a self-assigned mission for the first democratic government, the government of President Aylwin.

The government of President Aylwin found culture and the arts in a ~~verymuch~~ deteriorated, very deteriorated, ~~verymuch~~ chastised situation, with very little self esteem. And many artists who returned to Chile couldn't find a space here... Suddenly an Inti-Illimani returns to Chile, and they don't have much space in Chile. Their international accomplishments would be difficult for the Chilean market to match. So they chose eternal international touring as a way of surviving. It was the country's good fortune that the government of President Aylwin, and specifically the cultural affairs department of the Ministry of Education under Ricardo Lagos, made a great effort to compensate for that deficiency.

While I was a consultant to Ricardo Lagos, the mayor of Santiago, Jaime Ravinet, offered me a job as program director of the recently created Cultural Corporation of the Mapocho

¹⁰ [Asociación gremial de editores, librerías y distribuidores de libros creada en 1950.](#)

¹¹ [Ley 19.227 de Fomento del Libro y la Lectura aprobada en 1993 por el Parlamento.](#)

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Station¹². He offered me the job saying, “The only thing I ask of you before you answer is that you talk to Ricardo Lagos about it because I don’t want to appear as though I’m taking someone away from the Ministry for this job.” So I went to talk to the Minister and told him I had been offered the job and that I really didn’t see it as being incompatible with working for him, but I did see it as incompatible with my editorial job at Planeta. He thought that was fine. So I became director of programming in 1991.¹³

The principle objective was the architectural and construction work of restoring the building, which Hernán Rodríguez headed up. (The principle architect was Monserrat Palmer and Associates, plus three other architects: Teodoro Fernández, Ramón López y Rodrigo Pérez de Arce.) That part of the plan wasn’t yet finished when I came on to organize activities. I remained a consultant to the Ministry until the Book Law was approved in 1993. Then I left and concentrated solely on the work at Mapocho Station.

When I started the job I had the opportunity of being invited by the US government to visit remodeled train stations in the United States: in Pittsburgh, in Cincinnati, in Washington DC, in St. Louis. All of them are different from this one. This is a train station that no longer has rails. At Union Station, for example, train activity continues so there is a captive audience. We do not have that captive audience. We have to bring in an audience for each event we do. We start from zero each time. So my job was to program interesting things, ~~then~~ and then launches a strong advertising campaign. My training in journalism was very useful because managing the image and the communication of this center is very important. We became self-sufficient during the four years before work on the station itself was finished. While one part of the building was being restored, we would work in another.

¹² Ver www.estacionmapocho.cl

¹³ Para la historia de este Centro Cultural, ver Alfonso Calderón “Memorial de la Estación Mapocho” RILEditores, Santiago de Chile, 2005.

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I think that the cultural policy developed by President Aylwin will be remembered in Chilean history as one of the most effective. They didn't make a big fuss about it, but very solid cultural institutionalities were built.

FONDART (Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo de la Cultural y las Artes/National Fund of Development of Culture and the Arts) and the Book Law were created, both of which are permanent. (FONDART was a project that had been thwarted during Pinochet's time and was never put into practice.) The restoration project of the Mapocho Station was done, which cost 10 million dollars. Cultural funds for young people were created through the INJ (Instituto Nacional de la Juventud/ National Youth Institute), another fund for regions outside the capital through the ~~Secretaría de Desarrollo Regional del -General Secretariat of the Government~~ Ministerio del Interior, others through FOSIS. Multiple supports for cultural creation were initiated. The ~~Valdés Law-Ley de Donaciones Culturales~~¹⁴ was approved to facilitate cultural donations from corporations of the private sector.

A process of reconstruction was put in motion, which I would call silent because it was not a process of creating a great cultural ~~institutionality~~ institutionalizing. A Ministry of Culture was not created, not even a Sub-Secretariat of Culture. Rather, the administration acted on creating a cultural system by introducing elements that were compatible with the general policy. It was not the policy of Aylwin's government, as Allende's could have been, to intervene directly into the cultural system. The policy followed by Aylwin's government was much more in accord with given circumstances, and I believe that a middle ground was reached between the absolute intervention of the State and the absolute absence of the State, which characterized Pinochet's government. A large investment was made and was increased during the four years he was in office.

¹⁴ Es una Ley de estímulos tributarios mediante la cuál el estado aporta el 50% de los aportes de empresas privadas, por la vía del descuento de impuestos.

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There was the intention of recuperation and of reformulation. The government did not just repair; it repaired and reconstructed. A system of support for culture was reconstructed in a way that was different from what we have had historically. It was a government that recognized that the protagonist of culture in a country is its civil society, and that a government does not do more than provide the conditions for this art to develop. That policy had excellent results: FONDART, the Book Fund Project, the Mapocho Center, hundreds of municipal cultural corporations. I think the government of President Frei entered into another phase where the government said, “We are not going to maintain this level of growth in cultural investment, but we are going to stimulate private support.” It’s a little like saying, “Alright, the government fulfilled what it set out to do. Now let’s see how the private sector responds.” The great debate then became a dialogue about how the arts would be sponsored and promoted by the private sector. ¹⁵

¹⁵ En 2003, bajo el gobierno del Presidente Ricardo Lagos, se aprobó la Ley 19.891 que crea el Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, que recoge las aspiraciones del mundo de la cultura a través de una institución participativa, que tiene como órgano superior un consejo de 11 personas, entre las cuales solo 3 son designadas por el gobierno. Las otras 8 pertenecen a la sociedad civil y no pueden ser removidas por el gobierno. Se renuevan cada cuatro años, pero su cambio no coincide con los cambios de Presidente de la república, de modo que la política cultural es permanente y es una política de Estado que trasciende los mandatos presidenciales.

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