

35. Raquel Malatesta

If you ask me what I remember about Allende, when the elections for Allende took place, I turned 15 years old. It's supposed that during that time, girls celebrated their quinceañera. There was no celebration. Because, if you do the math, he won with around 36 percent. It means that the rest of the country wasn't very happy with the election. The mood went downhill, and as for myself, many people left the country, while others started making arrangements to leave. My family was split, with one part already abroad and the other considering leaving. My father, who had traveled abroad to be able to leave during Allende's time, had to give someone here a power of attorney over all his assets. You would leave with a few dollars according to the distance you were traveling and the country you were going to. And you couldn't have any foreign currency in your pocket because that meant going to jail. And what happened during Allende's time? My frustration, one of them, was with my 15th birthday, but I also played tennis, and to play tennis, I had to cross all of Santiago. But with the protests and all, I should have arrived home around 7:30 PM, but I got home after midnight. It was due to the bus strike and the chaos in the city with tear gas bombs and stones because there was a hole for the metro. Before, they built the metro by digging holes, not underground but on the surface. So the stones became projectiles. And at around 11 PM, they told me no more tennis. I had to quit tennis during that time too. Then there were the restrictions on going out because there was no gasoline. My grandmother, and I'll mention it now, worked her whole life with my grandfather. They had a store. And during that time, they told us that there were no contributions. What did they invest in? Stocks and properties. The stocks plummeted, they didn't yield dividends. And if a property became vacant, it would be occupied by others. So who had to support my grandmother during those years? It was my father because he was left without a job during that time. And so the government of Allende hindered my youth, to some extent, in going out. Also, during that time, I had an appendicitis attack. There was a curfew because everyone forgot that there was a curfew during that time. There was a curfew, and I had to get to the clinic. I arrived at the Santa María Clinic because there were no other private clinics, a la Dávila. There were no other private clinics. And due to the traffic, they had buses waiting for different professionals, so they told me to come back later. Well, then the appendicitis subsided, and I didn't have the operation. I ended up having the operation later in November 1973, and it was another [inaudible] where there were no beds where there was anesthesia, and where there was anesthesia, there were no beds. In the end, with the help of a doctor friend, I managed to get a room that a lady had brought for her bunion surgery, and her daughter was with her. The daughter gave me her bed. That's how my operation went, but I had to spend a day with an ice pack here to prevent peritonitis. That's my memory of Allende, which was...

My father had a factory, an industry that came from my grandparents. The employees during that time were very loyal and they followed through generations, you know. They tried to intervene, but the same employees didn't allow it. So, we had to move quickly from one side to another to prevent it, and they didn't intervene. It was thanks to the same employees who contributed money to the cause, you know? That was the way to survive, so that's how it was.

Then September 11 comes. The truth is that there was joy, and I lived in the Matadero neighborhood. It was a tough neighborhood, next to San Miguel, and two blocks away was Tamai, which was a military regiment. For three months, we lived in a house with commercial premises on the ground floor. My grandparents lived on the second floor, and we lived on the third floor, but it was built by my

grandmother. We spent three months with mattresses and windows covered due to the gunfire at night. When the curfew started, the shooting began. It wasn't that the military were practicing; it was that they were coming to attack the regiment. So, you never knew if the bullets would reach inside or not. We spent more than three months with mattresses covering the windows at night, all the windows covered with mattresses just in case. Nothing ever happened. It was a preventive measure that fortunately nothing happened. But it was difficult, a complicated period with an early curfew that lasted until December. From December, it started at eight or nine o'clock at night, but it was still strict. In that year, 1973, I was in school. We went on strike for the entire year. So, I have no idea about the aptitude test at the end and all that. But from there, the magic started, the country with a 600 percent inflation, the industry. The industry was affected because of how they intervened. It turns out that in the 1930s in Chile, during the hundred days of the Socialist Republic Government, they signed a decree stating that if the industry went on strike for more than X days, the State would intervene. That decree had never been used before, but during Allende's time, they made it effective. So, the industry was intervened. But who intervened? People from the party, not people who were there to produce, and prices were set too low. They also took over the farmlands, and they would come and occupy your land, leaving you on the street. If they had a preference for you, they would let you stay in the main house. The farmlands stopped producing. So, dealing with a country like that, with a closed economy, they started working and providing facilities to return. At one point in Chile, taxes were at zero because the only goal was to attract foreign capital and allow people here to prosper. That's how it was.

Imports, which our strong point has always been copper, were blocked from outside. Why? Because Allende had nationalized copper but hadn't paid the owners. So, they embargoed all our exports. There was nothing. There was no money in the country. And well, things continued and the country started to stabilize and move forward, forward, forward. And then came the plebiscite in '88. What did that plebiscite say? Well, Pinochet created the Constitution of '80, which provided a democratic way out for the process we were going through, which was precisely to have this plebiscite and let the people decide if he should continue, I think for another 8 years, or if elections should be held right away. So, for me, it was better for him to continue for another eight years. And there were still some things that needed to be stabilized. I mean, private universities had been established, but there was still that final regularization, when you put the projects into motion, the same Isapres (private health insurance companies). So, there were a series of projects coming that still needed further regulation. And that was my decision on why I wanted to continue with the military government because I had nothing. I was a working person, I had no restrictions. This government didn't impose any restrictions on me. I had all the facilities to speak, to move around the country, and do whatever I wanted. And I personally had no problems. Therefore, it was in my best interest for the government to continue and for things to move forward. And that was the decision to vote Yes, for another eight years. And honestly, I thought the Yes would win. The next day, to be honest, I went to work. So, I told my boss, I had my boss in one place, and usually I had to go somewhere else to work. So, what happened? What are you doing here? No, I said, "I don't feel like working, so I'm just going to show up for my hours." And he said, "How long is this going to last?" I don't know. Hopefully, not for long." So, it's true that I went to have a conversation. So, I chose to go to the place nearby instead of the one that was about three kilometers from my home. After all, we were all discussing the matter. So, the next day was tough for me. And well, pseudo-democracy arrived because let's not say that we have democracy now. We've been trying to transition for 28 years. Why haven't they been able to make a transition in 28 years? We're still talking about the

transition, and the country is stagnant. And that's my version of why I voted for Pinochet to continue for another seven or eight years.