

## 12. Carmen Sotomayor

I was very young, actually I was 32 years old. And at that time I already had two children, the eldest 7 years old and the youngest 3. Well, then, what I remember most is that I participated as a table manager. And that was very important to be able to control the votes, right? So, well, I had trained as a table proxy, we were very afraid of being a table proxy, and we had to control, I had a table, I had to control the votes and that the vote would be, let's say, without any cheating. So, and it was very interesting because there had been a whole organization of the No command, so we had spreadsheets like we recorded all the votes, everyone. We were writing down each vote, each vote. So, well, a person would come riding like a bicycle, collecting all these spreadsheets that were going to a vote counting center, which, basically, was the key for the dictatorship to recognize the results. So, that was very important, and I was directly involved in that. So, we were very committed to the No. So when the vote came, well, the most I remember is that there was brutal tension as to whether the results were going to be recognized, and until the last minute, it was not known, La Moneda was in silence until suddenly, this is no longer known, but General Matthei, who was one of the members of the government junta, which was the dictatorship, but he recognizes, entering La Moneda, that the No won. And that was a question but exciting for all of us, impressive, but the results were not yet known until two in the morning. And we kept stick to the television to see this, until Cardemil, who was the senator for National Renewal, if I'm not mistaken, recognized that we won. Now, people there, at two in the morning we were still very scared since the terror was great because, well, we had all lived through very hard experiences before, right? So, well, it is announced at two in the morning and nobody does anything at two in the morning. But the next morning we already left for the Alameda. And I remember, this is perhaps the most important thing for me, is that we were with Pedro, my husband, and my two children, and we were so happy with Pedro, we were emotional. And our children did not understand why? Because they were little.

Later we realized that in order to protect them, we had never taught them what a dictatorship was. So at that moment before leaving, we told him what had happened in Chile there at that time. Diego, who was my eldest son, was seven years old and understood something. And to Catalina, who was little but we told them, because we were very excited. And they didn't understand why we were on the verge of tears. So there we told them everything that had happened, that for the first time we told them that their father, Pedro, was wanted by DINA, my husband, and we told them there, we told them Pedro has been wanted by DINA, we have been through many dangers already a long time ago. So we were super excited, and we went with them to the Alameda, and there I remember that there were a large number of people, happy, all scared at the same time, many people, many, many people marching along the Alameda. With the flags of No, with the flags of Chile, singing, I don't remember the songs of that time. Also look, with my neighbors, because nobody knew what, we were all very scared, nobody knew who was who. And suddenly I see my neighbor across the street, she also came out with the flags. We all got out in the cars with the flags and we also began to recognize the neighbors who had voted No. I would tell you that this was the most impressive thing, and for me this was very strong, I realized there like no we had said nothing to the children. I don't know if that was good or bad, but that has made me think that I believe that we still transmit a lot of fear to the children. I'm talking to you from the whole period since they were little, surely because we lived with a lot of fear, we always had the fear that DINA would look for Pedro because they had looked for him a lot. Then I realized that the children didn't understand what was happening and that's why I thought about it later because surely there was a scare in our

family but they didn't understand it well. And from there they understood something, you understand me, it was very impressive that why we were so happy that this dictatorship that had been terrible for many friends ended. We had many imprisoned friends, many actually, tortured, that is, and Pedro was very, very, very sought , that is, he managed to escape, I don't know, because God is great, he managed to escape from being taken prisoner. And at a time that was in 1976, he disappeared and they looked for him there. But we always had that fear that they would come back. In fact, we had look, this is incredible, but our neighbor from the side over there who is no longer here, it is not the same house, he was a man from the DINA. Notice that we found out about this by chance, just after the time when they were persecuting Pedro or a little later, suddenly one day the neighbor tells me I have gone out to water, he says "yes, neighbor, I have a very strong back pain because I It's time to go out at night and he tells me of course because you know, because he had been from PDI Investigations before, during Allende's time. Because you know that I am from investigations, yes I told him, and now they transferred me to the DINA. So we live in terror, do you understand me? Because we had this man by our side and we were also active in a political party, Pedro was a bit clandestine for a while. So, the plebiscite was like this scare is over, this scare we had. It ends, having as freedom, especially ending the terror, ending the fear we had, that was the strongest. The happiness was enormous to feel that this was finally over and we were out of this.

Well, the other thing, I don't know if it's going to be, I had a scholarship to go to Europe to study a doctorate in Leuven and we, I had it before, I had the scholarship since 1988, we never wanted to leave and Pedro told me that we were not going to leave until Pinochet leaves. And we left until, and we left in 1990 when Aylwin came out, we said "now we're leaving, we're going to study" but before we didn't leave, we were involved and everything. So, that is why the plebiscite was also so important because it allowed us to have freedom, before we did not feel it, we felt that we had to stay here and fight until the dictatorship ended. It was like what we felt.