

## 22. Juan G. Valdés

My job in the 1988 plebiscite was to coordinate the No television campaign and therefore I was involved in an intense way, as I have never been more in my life on an issue day and night for 20 days. But he had already started this work months before. Therefore, the theme of the television program occupied me in such a way and I had such an obsession with the development of this process that the moment it ended, we were left with a feeling of postpartum, that is, a kind of depression, because I did not follow the program. And this was the day before the plebiscite and because of the concentration we had on the program, we only had the information that suited the program. We also did not know well about the other things that had been done and that were so important for the plebiscite to be successful, such as electoral control, the mobilization of the electorate, the attitude, the work of the parties, which was essential for the people to mobilized and we were able to re-register millions of people in the electoral registers. Therefore, I remember the night before the plebiscite. It was a party weekend. For us we had already won because the No program had been way too superior to the Yes program. This was recognized as an evident fact by all the people. The No program, in our opinion, had succeeded in mobilizing people and giving them enthusiasm. People liked to participate in that process of visioning the program and therefore also participating in the referendum. Therefore, that night we were with foreign friends who were visiting Chile and I remember very well Ana Belén and Víctor Manuel, the Spanish singers and musicians who accompanied us watching the latest programs of both Yes and No and closing this process. It was the night that there was a power blackout in Santiago and that many of our friends, and particularly the Spanish, thought that this was an attack and that this was the beginning of a military coup. I never thought that was possible. It gave me the impression that a type of social force of such magnitude had been built that it was very difficult for the military to dare to go against that popular spirit that was expressed by the No program and that was expressed with a sort of or with a kind of transgression. We had been transgressors and we had managed to do it. Therefore, going back to the times of 76, 77, 78, to the times of terror, required a level of violence and brutality on the part of the dictatorship that did not seem possible to implement.

Therefore, the next day I went to vote in the morning at a high school in Ñuñoa. I think I went with my children. That they were not old enough to vote and after voting in Ñuñoa, where I saw that classic spirit of the old Chilean elections in which the people seem to attend a perfectly structured and orderly ritual, in which the people remain silent, the people do not He makes demonstrations in the voting queues and people understand that they are facing a task of enormous importance. It comforted me to see the Chileans voting and I once again felt this certainty that we were going to win. I came back, went downtown to see Gonzalo Martner, my friend, who was coordinating the entire process of verifying votes and controlling the electoral process. I was with them and with the people who were there at the computers and who were with them, sitting at the table. That it was a job that we neither understood very well nor did it have much to do with what we had done, but it seemed necessary to show solidarity and maintain that esprit de corps that existed in the people who worked in the No command. And then, I was with my father, Gabriel Valdés, with whom we had lunch, talked, he had traveled the entire country in those days, he had just returned to Santiago and he was just like all of us waiting for this result without knowing what could happen the next day.

At night I went to the command. I was with Genaro and with all the people who were there. We realized that the Secretary of the Interior was unable to reread the results of the plebiscite and therefore they were delaying. But beyond having a feeling that this could be something serious, I had the feeling that they were very confused. Honestly, I don't remember being afraid that day, except for the moment when someone said "The police is withdrawing." And when the carabineros who guarded the hotel where we were in Alameda began to leave, when it began to happen that we were left alone and we saw that there was no one. The feeling, of course some had that Tanks could appear at night, was something possible. But I think I spoke at some point in the afternoon with Andrés Allamand or with one of the leaders of my generation who were on the other side and that I knew. And they also had the feeling that the plebiscite had ended, and that the No had won. Therefore, I repeat, although it was a very tense environment, and the counting of votes was done with great dedication and concentration and the people did not I wanted to not even show optimism because I was afraid to show optimism in any way.

I had a sense of calm. It seemed to me that the foreign presence, the international observers, the international journalists who were in that room gave us a guarantee of calm. Therefore, when the results began to appear and it became evident, and then the three soldiers and Onofre Jarpa, the Minister of the Interior, the former Minister of the Interior of Pinochet, appeared, saying that the plebiscite was won by No, and he said so General Stange, General Matthei, excuse me, and also Admiral Merino said it in a way. Well, it was clear that Pinochet could not ignore what had happened. Therefore, we stayed until three or four in the morning celebrating. Particularly when the Government recognized and it was an absolutely unique moment in one's life. There are no two places and two moments equal to that. It is very difficult for me to imagine another moment of triumph similar to that of. At. To that night. Perhaps the only one that comes to mind is one much earlier than the year 1967, when we occupied the Catholic University as students and at night we were told that the head of the university had resigned. After 20 days locked up in that university, a civilian and an architect and a person we wanted as rector of the university were appointed. And I remember when we went out to the Alameda. It's similar to the night we went out to the Alameda after the referendum, when we felt a sense of triumph that is impossible to describe in words and that has to do with a kind of essential joy and essential optimism.

The next day we saw people go out into the streets, hug police officers, find the country as a country that could dream of what we had announced in the no programs as something possible. Therefore, I don't have many more memories than that. I remember at night Patricio Aylwin, Ricardo Lagos, Luis Maira and all the friends hugging each other. There was a mass of people, almost impossible to be close or hug each other, otherwise we all hugged. I remember a famous journalist, very close to the Communist Party, who hugged me that night and told me you were right. Which was enough to show that those friends of mine who had said that the plebiscite was necessarily going to be a fraud, that we had no chance of winning and were admitting that they had been wrong, which is not unimportant. So, it was something clear that will be forever marked in one's life. But these memories came to me for the first time, and I think about it after a long time and I think that was it.