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Branding the Chilean nation : socio-cultural change, national identity and international image

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Citation

Prieto Larraín, M. C. (2011, November 24). *Branding the Chilean nation : socio-cultural change, national identity and international image*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/18141>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

CHAPTER 6

Chile in its Bicentennial Year: a Case Study

Introduction

You have what people are looking for: proximity to nature, modesty, sobriety, your country has governability, science, imagination and vision. With those elements you can build a puzzle and tell the world that this country is not in the fringes of the planet but at the heart of global dialogue.¹

With these words Simon Anholt—usually identified as the inventor and populariser of the concept of nation-branding—summarized what he thought of Chile in terms of its country image-building process. During 2009 he worked with *Fundación Imagen de Chile* on a major project to develop this nation's international identity and reputation. Although his words were complimentary, he stated in plain language that Chile 'does not exist' for most inhabitants of the planet, meaning that it is generally unknown. He added that—in his view—Chile is one of the few nations that deserve to be well known or, in other words, that there is but a small number of countries that meet the Western requirements of 'good behaviour' and attractiveness: the same as Germany or Japan, Chile is 'boring' or 'unsurprising', a concept that denotes predictability and generates trust.²

¹ 'S. Anholt: Presupuestos y Requisitos para una Política de Estado en Materia de Promoción del País', 22 April 2009 in <http://www.imagenpais.cl/frmviewnoticia.aspx?idArticulo=196>

² *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, 2010 was far from predictable for Chile. What is more, it was quite remarkable: 'catastrophic in February after one of the worse earthquakes the world has witnessed; symbolic with the celebration of its Bicentennial; heroic because of the miners' rescue'.³ In fact, the country celebrated a mega event—the commemoration of its Bicentennial—with a new rightwing political coalition in power, being shaken by a mega-quake and embarked upon the task of saving thirty-three miners buried in a pit. The four events involved a trial to Chile's capacity to handle its international image as the Bicentennial celebration meant increased media exposure in Latin American nations; the new rightwing government would probably make everybody evoke past images of Pinochet's dictatorship, and the impact of two negative events—an earthquake and a mining accident—were not likely to contribute to its positive reputation. Against all odds, these events proved advantageous to Chile's international repute and good name for governance.

In the first place, while Latin America was celebrating the Bicentennial of the start of its struggle for independence from Spain, a number of its nations had further cause for celebration. In fact, despite several difficulties, from 2003 to 2008 the region's economic growth averaged 5 per cent and inflation was fairly low. Also, a subcontinent which had become a byword for financial instability had performed comparatively well through the subprime crisis. Once the region overcame the crisis, there was a strong recovery and a 5 per cent growth became once again the goal of most of the region's nations.⁴ With this panorama as a backdrop to the Bicentennial celebration, the countries' *mise en scène* was quite festive. Thus, Chile's own celebration was perceived within a positive continental environment. Also the peaceful election of a rightwing President and the uneventful debarkation of twenty-year-ruling Concertación added to the international recognition of its political stability.⁵

Nevertheless, two events which occurred in Chile during 2010 made its Bicentennial merriments quite particular. As mentioned above, February's cataclysm was to prove devastating and costly. Thus, the celebration of Sebastián Piñera's coming to power was very austere and September's commemorations were expected to be so. What contributed to shift the sombre mood prevailing in the country since the quake was

³ 'Piñera: Le Sauvage des Mineurs a Transformé le Chili', *Le Figaro*, 20 October 2010.

⁴ 'So Near, and Yet so Far', *The Economist*, 9 September 2010.

⁵ D. Kaufmann (2010a), 'Natural Disasters, National Diligence: the Chilean Earthquake in Perspective' in http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0305_chile_earthquake_kaufmann.aspx

a tragedy that ended in triumph. In fact, the pitmen trapped in a mine in northern Chile, who survived extremely harsh conditions, became symbols of perseverance. If they had endured, Chile would also get back on its feet.⁶

Chapter 6 concentrates on these two events mainly because they clearly affected Chile's country image. Section 6.1 starts by describing February's quake and tsunami and then gives a historical account of the main earth movements and tidal waves that have hit this nation along its history. After asking a rhetorical question —why do Chileans insist on staying in such a geologically unstable land? — the section ends by explaining that an even worse earthquake has been predicted. Section 6.2 studies the deficiencies in Chile's technical capacity to face a mega-quake, the immediate post-catastrophe response and the failure to release a tsunami warning. Other topics considered are the inefficiency with which aid was initially delivered and the delay in sending military personnel into the affected areas so as to control vandalism and pillage. Section 6.2 also addresses issues such as the solidarity shown by Chileans during the post catastrophe months.

Section 6.3 concentrates on the outcome of the earthquake in terms of Chile's international image. In spite of having been a negative event, world opinion in general was well impressed by Chile's fast pace getting back to normal. In fact, overseas, post-quake Chile was perceived as organized, efficient and resilient. Probably the role played by *Fundación Imagen de Chile* and the disastrous situation of post-quake Haiti helped to install this positive vision of the country's world brand. Interestingly, this vision is not shared by Chileans. In fact, a high percentage thinks that reconstruction has been too slow: once again there is a rift between self-perception and what outsiders see.⁷ Also intended to study the way Chile's international image behaved, section 6.4 starts by describing the accident in the *San José* mine, shows how the search proceeded until the miners were found alive, and gives some detailed information on the organization of the rescue. *Operación San Lorenzo's* live transmission had an impact on Chile's

⁶ 'The Media Circus at Chile's *San José* Mine', *Der Spiegel*, 9 August 2010.

⁷ Diego Vergara R., Mayor of Paine, interviewed on 10 June 2011. Paine is a rural area close to Santiago. Mayor Vergara explains that two factors have prevented a quicker reconstruction process at least in rural areas: firstly, lack of money; secondly, in those zones not declared as catastrophic, the legal requirements for building new houses are quite strict. In fact, a governmental plan that would have allowed for the construction of 58 new houses in Paine for December 2010 has managed to build only 29 because of these legal requirements.

international reputation. Four attributes were attached to the country: efficiency, organizational capacity, solidarity and strong spirit/resilience.

The three strands —country image, national identity and social change— studied in this thesis also intertwine in Chapter 6. February's earthquake and the Atacama pitmen saga definitely had an impact on the world's opinion on Chile. The earthquake was an unfortunate event and would not normally have helped to improve the country's image, yet did so. Chile's fairly quick response to the earthquake and its resilience and capacity to get back on its feet were well perceived in different places, mainly among the foreign business elite sectors. Also the comparison with Haiti's sad disaster and its incapacity to deal with it in a prompt and independent manner added up to the international approval of Chile. Nevertheless, what was going to be probably the most important visibility window since the fall of Allende and rise of Pinochet was the disaster, heroic survival and rescue of the thirty-three pitmen in the Atacama Desert. In fact, although February's earthquake attracted more worldwide attention than normal,⁸ the miners' survival and rescue implied a great leap in its international visibility and reputation. Although this sudden fame has to be taken care of, it has been a once-in-a-lifetime chance to improve this small and peripheral country's name. As for Chile's national identity, the events addressed in Chapter 6 confirm and contribute to reinforce some of its traits. Thus, resilience, culture of order and endeavour or a strong belief in being an exceptional country, were reinforced during the events narrated here and confirmed as part of 'Chileanness'. As for social change, this chapter shows that upward mobility is not guaranteed. In fact, although the rescue of the miners showed that Chile has been able to get hold of hi-tech instruments and is capable of organizing first-world-type rescue events, the earthquake definitely meant a return to poverty of people who had managed to get out of it. This, added to the aftermath of the subprime crisis plus alleged —and not fully proven— public mismanagement during the last Concertacion government, made poverty rates rise.⁹

⁸ F. Pujol, 'Los Beneficios del Rescate de los 33 Mineros Irán a la Marca Chile', *El Mercurio*, 19 October 2010.

⁹ CASEN 2009. Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional in: http://www.mideplan.cl/casen2009/RESULTADOS_CASEN_2009.pdf

6.1 Quakes and the Making of 'Chileanness'

2010 arrived with an impending change of government. In fact, after 20 years in office the Concertación was leaving La Moneda palace, as the January election had been won by their political opponents, the Alianza por Chile. The rightwing coalition had been getting ready to re-enter La Moneda promising greater efficiency and an improvement in the nation's economy. Nevertheless, destiny was preparing to pull the rug under the new administration's feet as a mega-quake and tidal wave severely hit almost one third of this long country. Most of the planning made by the newcomers had to be filed away and emergency measures put into place. Section 6.1 starts by describing February's earthquake explaining that telluric movements have contributed to create a climate of resilience, order and entrepreneurial spirit in Chile. In fact, its citizens are aware that every twenty five years a natural disaster will probably hit their families and belongings. If they are lucky, there will be damage, but there is also the possibility of absolute destruction. The cycle of life starts all over again pushing Chileans to pull through and rebuild what they have lost. An example of this is that the country's reconstruction started very quickly despite the fact that Chileans have been expecting an even stronger earthquake, announced by scientists shortly after the February quake.¹⁰

This fact makes one wonder: why do Chileans stay in this country and do not move to safer places? Probably, for years Chile's isolation and the poverty of its dwellers made it difficult for them to run away from the unsteady lands that saw them grow. In addition, as shown in earlier chapters, there is some evidence suggesting that an early and strong love for their motherland characterizes those living in this long and remote strip of land —from colonial times to the present— preventing nationals from leaving. Finally, as also mentioned in other chapters, quakes have contributed to the development of a longing for relative order and stability, as opposed to the chaos produced by the trembling earth.

The man of Chile —active geography par excellence— rebuilds cities and restores the crops after each earthquake with amazing confidence and great contempt for the treacherous ground: he knows that between two disasters many years fit in. There is in our people a stoicism that is not cold but burning, determined to possess and enjoy

¹⁰ M. Cisternas *et al.* (2005) 'Predecessors of the Giant 1960 Chile Earthquake', *Nature* (437), pp. 404-407.

their land, one that the telluric anger takes away from their hands for a moment only. While I narrate their story these people are once again recovering the soil, planning and doing.¹¹

Gabriela Mistral writes these lines in April 1939, three months after an 8.3 earthquake on the Richter scale hit the southern city of Chillán's, almost entirely reducing it to rubble. Although not the strongest seismic event that has taken place in Chile, its death toll was quite high: some twenty-four thousand lives were taken away by the trembling earth that night on January 24th, 1939. Although with a significantly lower rate of casualties, the February 27th 2010 earthquake —8.8 on the Richter scale and widely known as 27-F— was nevertheless the second strongest quake in the lengthy list of such events that periodically hit Chile. In fact, that night straight high-rise buildings and adobe houses became leaning towers and collapsing mud; flat ground and solid hills changed their geological features; and the peaceful sea spawned an enormous and devastating tidal wave.

This sixth greatest earth movement in the world since records began strongly hit six of Chile's fifteen regions and was felt throughout practically the whole national territory and even as far as Buenos Aires in Argentina and São Paulo in Brazil.¹² In order to understand its magnitude and devastating effects, I will mention some details. In my view this may help to understand why several Chilean historians consider that tremors in general have contributed to create within this nation a spirit of resilience, order and entrepreneurship¹³ just as the battle against the waters has intervened in the forging of the Dutch character.¹⁴

¹¹ G. Mistral, 'Geografía Humana de Chile' in R. E. Scarpa (1978) *Gabriela Anda por el Mundo*. Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello.

The text in Spanish reads "El hombre de Chile, naturaleza activa por excelencia, después de cada terremoto reconstruye las ciudades y restablece los cultivos, con una confianza pasmosa y con gran desdén hacia la traidora del suelo, pues él sabe que entre dos catástrofes caben muchos años. Hay en nuestra gente un estoicismo no helado sino ardiente, una decisión tal de poseer y de gozar su tierra, que la furia telúrica se la quita de la mano apenas un momento. Allí están ellos, mientras yo los cuento, con la tierra otra vez recobrada, planeando y haciendo."

¹² 'Confirman que el Sismo de Chile se Sintió en Buenos Aires', *Infobae*, 27 February 2010 and 'Terremoto no Chile é sentido em São Paulo', *Terra*, 27 February 2010.

¹³ For example, see S. Collier and W. Sater, *op. cit* and G. Vial (2009) *op. cit*.

¹⁴ See S. Schama (1987) *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. New York: Vintage Books and P. Arblaster (2006) *A History of the Low Countries*. New York: Palgrave.

The epicentre of the earthquake was located 4.75 kilometres deep in the earth's crust underneath the seabed, facing the small towns of Curanipe and Cobquecura on the continent. It caused a change in the planet's rotation —making days 1.26 microseconds shorter— and changing the inclination of the axis of the earth by 8 centimetres.¹⁵ It also moved the city of Santiago 28 centimetres southwest and the city of Concepción some 3 metres to the west,¹⁶ raised the port of Talcahuano some 1.5 metres,¹⁷ and tilted several lakes in the Arauco region some 26 centimetres.¹⁸ Although the worst earthquake ever recorded in the world —9.5 on the Richter scale— also took place in Chile in 1960, its devastating effect was said to be less severe than that of the 2010 quake because the territory affected was circumscribed to the city of Valdivia and surrounding areas in the south of the country. Thus, 27-F has possibly been the worst cataclysm in Chile: it affected its most densely populated areas —some thirteen million people, i.e. 80 per cent of the total population— and the economic heartland of the country. The impact of the tremor was equivalent to one hundred atomic bombs like those dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.¹⁹

As normally happens when the epicentre of a quake is located under the seabed, a tsunami soon struck the coastline of the regions of Maule and Bío-Bío. Approximately half an hour after the quake, an eight metre high tidal wave, followed by a second wave some ten metres and a third some eight metres high destroyed towns like Constitución, Pelluhue, Curanipe and Duao and caused severe damage in one of Chile's main ports, Talcahuano.²⁰ Sadly, 124²¹ out of the official 521 earthquake casualties²² were caused by the tidal wave, which the authorities failed to warn about, despite having received an —albeit ambiguous— tsunami alert. As for material damages, some five hundred thousand dwellings collapsed and two million people lost most of their possessions. Many structures were not destroyed by the mega-quake but by the aftershocks. Ac-

¹⁵ 'Chile Earthquake: Shock Effect on Earth's Axis', *The Guardian*, 2 March 2010.

¹⁶ 'Chile Earthquake Moved City of Concepcion 10ft to the West', *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 March 2010.

¹⁷ 'Imagen Satelital Muestra que la Costa de Talcahuano se Elevó 1.5 Metros Tras el Terremoto', *El Mercurio*, 20 April 2010.

¹⁸ 'Terremoto Deformó e Incluyó Lagos de Arauco', *El Mercurio*, 25 April 2010 and 'Satellite Images Show That Talcahuano "Grew" 1.5 Meters Higher as a Result of Earthquake', *Santiago Times*, 21 April 2010.

¹⁹ 'Así se Gestó el Megaterremoto, el Más Intenso en Chile desde 1960', *La Tercera*, 28 February 2010.

²⁰ 'Tres Enormes Olas Devastan a Constitución tras Sismo', *La Tercera*, 28 February 2010 and 'Olas de 5 Metros Azotan Talcahuano y Arrastran Embarcaciones y Casas', *La Tercera*, 28 February 2010.

²¹ 'Las Contradicciones Frente a la Catástrofe', *El Mercurio*, 23 May 2010.

²² Access this information at the Interior Minister's web page at .
http://www.interior.gov.cl/filesapp/Lista_fallecidos.pdf

cording to the United States Geological Survey,²³ between 27 February and 14 July 2010, 13 telluric movements —ranging over 6 on the Richter scale— kept shaking the land.²⁴ This further affected the already battered Chilean industrial sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and wineries. The wine-making industry alone reported a loss of some US\$ 250 million.²⁵ It has been estimated that the whole economic cost of the disaster amounted to 18 per cent of Chile's GDP, i.e. US\$ 30 billion. An equivalent loss would be about \$2 trillion in the United States' economy.²⁶

Chileans know that when an earthquake comes, it destroys the lives of many and the toil of years, making it necessary to start all over again. Why do they stay instead of moving to a safer residence? Why did the Spanish *conquistadores* remain in a place that—as seen in Chapter 2— was so hard to conquer and was hit by geological disasters periodically? Probably the answer was given by Pedro de Valdivia in his letter to the then Spanish monarch: 'this land is such that for living and for settling in, there is none better in the world'.²⁷ In the same vein, narrations by colonial writers, such as Alonso de Ovalle and Alonso de Ercilla, to twentieth century authors, such as Pablo Neruda, Gabriela Mistral or Benjamín Subercaseaux, have all sung the praises of their fellow nationals and fondness for their motherland. As asserted by historian Ricardo Krebs, although most human beings are proud of their native land, this psychological trait developed in Chile quite strongly and from early on: 'affectionate patriotism' became a characteristic of Chilean writings.²⁸ Thus, love for their native country developed into an identity trait of Chileans in spite of the hardships triggered by natural disasters. At the same time, these disasters —especially earthquakes, part of Chileans' DNA—²⁹ also bred an identity trait: human resilience,³⁰ the 'burning stoicism' of those determined to possess and enjoy their land in spite of nature.³¹ It also made them yearn for organization and stability³² leading them to build a culture of order, as mentioned

²³ <http://www.usgs.gov/>

²⁴ For further information access.

http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/recenteqsww/Maps/degree10/285_-35.php

²⁵ 'Tragédia na Estrela dos Andes', *Veja*, 10 March 2010.

²⁶ 'Jeffrey Sachs; Chile's Lessons in Leadership', *The New York Times*, 20 October 2010.

²⁷ Pedro de Valdivia to Emperor Charles V, 4 September 1545 in *Cartas de Pedro de Valdivia* (1970), *op. cit.*, p. 36.

²⁸ R. Krebs, *op. cit.*, pp. 16 and 17.

²⁹ 'Carta Abierta de Ricardo Lagos Escobar: La Tarea de Chile Hoy: Reconstruir y Avanzar', *La Tercera* 21 March 2010.

³⁰ D. Kaufmann (2010a) *op. cit.*

³¹ G. Mistral, 'Geografía Humana de Chile', *op. cit.*

³² S. Collier and W. Sater, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

in Chapters 1 and 2. Moreover, this helps to understand why Chileans—who are relatively cheerful people—are often considered to be more sombre and less merry than other Latin Americans.³³

In pre-Hispanic times, the local natives developed a religious interpretation of earthquakes and other natural disasters. For example, the Mapuche people believed that seismic events were manifestations of cosmic disequilibrium. In order to regain the balance, they deemed it necessary to perform reparatory rites and offerings to their deities.³⁴ These offerings were seldom human lives, but it has been recorded that, after the catastrophe of 1960, human sacrifices were suggested by Mapuche communities.³⁵ The worst earthquake registered during colonial times took place in May 1647. It simply devastated the whole colony³⁶ and reduced Santiago to rubble. The coming years were very trying for the colonial masters as the cataclysm was preceded by a draught, triggered an economic crisis and ended in a general rise of the natives.³⁷ Although the 1751 earthquake was less devastating in the Central Valley, it was very destructive in the city of Concepción and its environs, to the point of forcing the removal of the city and its reconstruction on its current site, further away from the coast.³⁸ The description of that year's catastrophe reads very much like that of 2010. In addition, the area affected by the 2010 earthquake and tsunami is the same:

Shortly after one o'clock AM came a strong tremor and we all left our rooms and went to the *patios* of the house. Some ten minutes later a terrible earth movement began, its rumbles were maddening. (...) Nothing was left, no church, neither small nor big houses, people fell to the ground (...) One of God's wonders was that He impeded the rise of the ocean for half an hour so that most of the people were able to run away to the hills. (...) Then the sea started to boil; it withdrew from the coast and seven minutes later it came back with great force, each wave curling above the next one up to such height that the waters totally covered the city with the violence of horses in rampage.³⁹

³³ 'Jennyfer Salvo: Este Terremoto es una Oportunidad para Mostrar Chile', *El Mercurio*, 8 Abril 2010.

³⁴ R. Foerster (1995) *Introducción a la Religiosidad Mapuche*. Santiago: Editorial Universitaria.

³⁵ Los Terremotos en Chile (1570-1985). Cultura Mapuche in <http://www.memoriachilena.cl/temas/dest.asp?id=terremotosculturamapuche>

³⁶ D. Barros Arana, *op. cit.*, p. 49 and p. 54.

³⁷ Los Terremotos en Chile (1570-1985). Mayo de 1947 in: <http://www.memoriachilena.cl/temas/dest.asp?id=terremotosmayo>

³⁸ I. Municipalidad de Concepción. Información Comunal. Traslado de Concepción al Valle de la Mocha in <http://www.concepcion.cl>

³⁹ D. Barros Arana, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

This description also fits the accounts of the 1960 catastrophe. On that occasions the city of Valdivia was severely damaged and the coming tidal waves washed away what was left, drowning people, sinking boats, ships and hills that disappeared under the ocean.⁴⁰ As mentioned above, this 9.5 mega-quake has been the strongest ever registered in the planet. Seismology experts are of the opinion that they occur once every four hundred years.⁴¹ Nevertheless, others think that northern Chile should experience a Valdivia-like cataclysm —much stronger than that of 2010— in the coming years.⁴² While Chileans are expecting it, they are trying to learn from the mistakes and shortcomings of some authorities during the 2010 earthquake, as will be seen in the next section.

6.2 Chile's Modernity and Governance Under Scrutiny

Although up until now science has not been able to predict with accuracy the timing of an earthquake, it is also true that countries like Chile or Japan —members of the sad club of seismic nations— should be on a better footing than others to face such catastrophes. For example, compared to Haiti, a country that also suffered an earthquake in 2010 and whose case will be analyzed in section 6.3, Chile's response to the calamity was far better. Nevertheless it was not good enough as 124 lives could have been spared and social peace and security ensured with a prompter reaction. In fact, the failure to launch a tsunami warning, the slow pace when delivering essential goods to the victims of the earthquake and the lack of a decision to send the armed forces into the affected areas to maintain peace were three aspects that may be argued were erroneously handled by Bachelet's administration. As for sending for the armed forces, it is understandable that the members of a Concertacionista government, several of whom had suffered the repression of the military dictatorship, feared the presence of soldiers in the streets and thus delayed the deployment of troops.

As regards the failed tsunami alert, facts are unclear. It appears that a first warning was sent at 3:45am Chilean time by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) based in the United States to Chile's Hydrographical and

⁴⁰ 'Los Gritos del Primer Mega Terremoto', *El Mercurio*, 10 April 2010.

⁴¹ M. Cisternas *et. al.*, *op. cit.*

⁴² 'Le Chili, Une Zone Sismique a Risques', *Le Figaro*, 27 February 2010.

Oceanographic Service (SHOA)⁴³, which reports to the Navy. Apparently Chile's instruments to measure the rise in sea levels along the country failed.⁴⁴ It has also been said that initially the SOHA thought that the earthquake epicentre had been inland, which reduced the possibilities of a tidal wave. In any case, at 3:51 SHOA staff sent an alarm message by radio and later by fax to the Chilean National Emergency Office (ONEMI).⁴⁵ It is precisely this point that has caused much controversy. The ONEMI stated that the radio message had said that the epicentre had been inland, a fact that has been strongly denied by the SHOA.⁴⁶ As regards the fax, ONEMI has stated that it was blurred and ambiguous⁴⁷ and that its officials decided not to send a tsunami alert message to the rest of the country. This stopped people from running away to the highlands. In my view, this event can have a second reading: Chileans trust in their authorities and institutions and therefore abide by their guidelines. Although this tendency has helped to achieve social stability, it can also lead to tragedies like this one.

In spite of dissenting opinions on who is to be blamed for the failed tidal wave alert, there is a consensus on the slow way in which the government dealt with delivering aid and basic supplies to the most afflicted cities in the south and its hesitation to deploy the army in the areas affected to preserve the law and order. In fact, a few hours after the quake and tsunami, there was looting and pillage, as unfortunately happens in almost every catastrophic event around the globe. Although partly due to its incapacity to assess local needs as a result of the general power and communication failure,⁴⁸ I also believe that the administration's lack of efficiency might have a simple explanation: the quake hit during Chile's summer holidays, and therefore, the government officials were away and quite 'unplugged'.

Jacqueline van Rysselberghe, Major of the city of Concepción at the time, beseeched the central authorities to send in troops⁴⁹ as the looting of shops and houses was increasing and bands of people armed with rifles, metal stakes and hatches attacked

⁴³ Servicio Hidrográfico y Oceanográfico de Chile.

⁴⁴ 'Las Olas Después del Sismo Magnitud 8.8', *Caras*, 12 March 2010.

⁴⁵ Oficina Nacional de Emergencia Ministerio del Interior.

⁴⁶ 'Las Principales Controversias que Establece el Informe Final de la Comisión Terremoto', *El Mercurio*, 29 August 2010.

⁴⁷ 'Las Contradicciones Frente a la Catástrofe', *El Mercurio*, 23 May 2010, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ D. Kaufmann (2010a) *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ 'Desesperado Llamado de Van Rysselberghe: Imploramos a la Presidenta que Envíe más Militares', *Radio ADN*, 1 March 2010.

fire-fighters and burnt supermarkets.⁵⁰ The government was hesitant to do so given that the presence of military on the streets could remind people of Pinochet's regime.⁵¹ Interestingly, even left wing dwellers of Concepción applauded the patrolling of some ten thousand army people who arrived in the city:⁵² 'I never thought I would see in a leftist area such as Concepción, people from popular sectors applauding the arrival of twelve tanks in their neighbourhood' commented van Rysselberghe.⁵³ Within a few days the situation was normalized and a brief amnesty was declared so that looters could return the stolen goods. Risking prison if they were found with those items, hundreds decided to get rid of them. In fact, more than thirty five lorries were needed to transport the looted goods —television sets, sofas, mattresses, fridges, items that had nothing to do with survival— adding up to some US\$ 2 million.⁵⁴

March 11th 2010 was marked by two events, political the first, geological the second. That day Michel Bachelet — and with her the Concertación— left power, and a new Aliancista President was sworn in. During the ceremony a 6.9 aftershock struck Valparaíso —where those events were taking place, making buildings sway, rattling windows and triggering a tsunami alert that sent people running to the hills. Twelve days had passed since the 8.8 seism and the new tremor reminded Chile of the tragedy that the incoming government had to deal with. There were renewed efforts to deliver basic supplies to more than two million Chileans affected by the quake and several collateral topics emerged. Firstly, the media never stopped showing the considerable solidarity movement created by the disaster both overseas and within Chile. In fact, hundreds of people —of their own accord and for free— went to the affected regions to help to build houses and collect food and clothes to deliver to the homeless. Even schools and universities located in areas that were not or were less affected, voluntarily delayed the beginning of the academic year so that the students could go and give a hand. This type of reaction is not new to Chile: as mentioned in Chapter 1, in a land marked by natural disasters the need to help others has also developed into a national trait.

⁵⁰ 'Chile Earthquake: Troops Sent in to Deter Looting and Violence', *The Guardian*, 2 March 2010.

⁵¹ D. Kaufmann (2010a), *op. cit.*

⁵² J. García-Huidobro, H. Herrera and D. Mansuy (2010) *8.8 Escombros en el Bicentenario*. Santiago: Instituto Democracia y Mercado – Pan American Development Foundation, pp. 129-130.

⁵³ '480 Edificios Inhabitables en el Gran Santiago', *El Mercurio*, 6 March 2010.

⁵⁴ 'Chile Looters Rush to Dump Stolen Goods', *The Guardian*, 8 March 2010.

A second aspect shown by the media was that although former president Bachelet had declared that she was leaving Chile in good shape,⁵⁵ many Chileans considered that her government had not dealt properly with the catastrophe.⁵⁶ For example, a poll conducted at that time found that 72 per cent of respondents believed that the government had responded late and inefficiently during the emergency.⁵⁷ Thirdly, when CASEN 2009 was published, showing that for the first time since 1987 poverty had increased in Chile in the past three years⁵⁸ this highly sensitive issue was once again centre stage. Apart from what was explained in Chapters 4 and 5, the worrying fact was that the earthquake would undoubtedly increase the poverty levels given the fact that many had lost all their possessions and initially some 89,000 people were left jobless.⁵⁹ Also, the looting that took place mostly in the Maule and Bío-Bío regions provided food for thought about the high social differences existing in the country, which might have pushed ordinary people to steal. In fact, not all the looting was done by criminals. The quake gave many of the looters the chance to obtain goods that they did not and would not own in the near future.⁶⁰ In this sense, the conclusions by authors such as Gonzalo Vial⁶¹ and Patricio Navia,⁶² in the sense that the social rift between the poor and the rich would eventually trigger a social explosion, became a worrying reality.⁶³ All the same, if Chile's catastrophe and the way it was handled are compared with similar events that have occurred in other nations, plunder usually occurs, even in wealthy nations. Such was the case of New Orleans after hurricane Katrina⁶⁴ in 2005 and of New Zealand after the 2010 earthquake.⁶⁵ What is more, without ignoring the severe mismanagement and mistakes made after Chile's seism, for the international public the general handling of Chile's post-catastrophe was an

⁵⁵ 'Aftershock Hits Chile as Sebastián Piñera Sworn In', *The Guardian*, 11 March 2010.

⁵⁶ 'Departing Chilean President Defends Governmental Actions After Quake', *New York Times*, 6 March 2010.

⁵⁷ 'Chile Looters Rush to Dump Stolen Goods', *The Guardian*, 8 Monday 2010, *op. cit.*

⁵⁸ 'Pobreza en Chile Crece por Primera Vez desde 1987 y Afecta a 2.5 Millones de Personas', *El Mercurio*, 14 July 2010.

⁵⁹ 'OIT Estima que el Terremoto en Chile Destruyó 67.000 Empleos', *América Economía*, 12 August 2010.

⁶⁰ J. García-Huidobro, H. Herrera and D. Mansuy, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-119.

⁶¹ G. Vial (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 1391.

⁶² P. Navia, 'La Otra Falla Geológica que Amenaza a Chile', *Poder 360°*, March 2010.

⁶³ J. García-Huidobro, H. Herrera and D. Mansuy, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-119.

⁶⁴ D. Kaufmann, (2010a), *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ 'New Zealand Earthquake Opens Door to Looters', *New York Post*, 4 September 2010.

apparently positive visibility window. It also showed a country that had governability and was able to face disaster just like a first world nation would.⁶⁶

Three other issues caught the public attention: how badly communications had responded during the catastrophe, how relatively ill equipped Chile is in order to get fast and accurate information about recent seismic events, and the damaged suffered by several buildings, some of them quite new. In the first case, in the immediate aftermath of the quake almost all communications collapsed —mobile phones, the internet, television and radio— leaving the country off-line for several hours and even days in some areas. This was especially serious in the case of the failed tsunami warning and the evaluation and organization of early assistance. Thus, when one hour after the quake ONEMI's director got to the agency's headquarters, the officials on duty still had not been able to get in touch with the regions of Maule and Bío-Bío.⁶⁷ They had not been able to double-check their information about the quake with North American seismological centres. Worse still, it was the communications and power breakdown that impeded SHOA from double-checking the data arriving from NOAA and ONEMI in order to ratify the tidal wave information coming from the naval services.⁶⁸

As repeatedly indicated by Alberto Maturana, ONEMI's director throughout several of the Concertacion governments, the incompetence and lack of pro-activity of different officials in charge played a part in the tsunami disaster.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it is quite clear that other factors also contributed. Chile —one of the most seismic nations on earth— is ill-equipped to handle such a catastrophe in a timely manner. In fact, whereas Japan has some five thousand seismographers spread around its islands, Chile has a little over a hundred. Also, whereas the Asian country has an important corps of expert seismologists, Chile does not. It all comes down to money: the South American nation cannot afford to have Japan's personnel or equipment. On the one hand, the communication and seismological failures put on hold Chile's successful modernization process of the past decades: as studied in Chapter 5, Chile shows some signs of fast material and social development, but clearly there is still a long way to go before reaching full development, no matter how often the central authorities may

⁶⁶ D. Kaufman (2010a), *op. cit.*

⁶⁷ 'Los Descargos de Carmen Fernández y su Defensa de la Oficina Nacional de Emergencia', *El Mercurio*, 6 March 2010.

⁶⁸ 'Las Contradicciones Frente a la Catástrofe', *El Mercurio*, *op. cit.* and 'Los Descargos de Carmen Fernández y su Defensa de la Oficina Nacional de Emergencia', *El Mercurio*, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ 'Las Olas Después del Sismo Magnitud 8.8', *Caras*, *op. cit.*

promise the country that it is almost there. On the other hand, the disastrous aftermath of Japan's 2011 earthquake and tsunami has shown that not even the best equipment or high-technology alarm systems can stop the force of nature.⁷⁰

A final fact that was very much debated was the collapse of buildings that did not stand the strength of the tremors all over the country. Sadly, many of the adobe churches, public buildings and houses that had resisted the 1985 quake, failed to do so this time. This opened a debate on whether it would be better to forbid in the future the construction of any mud and straw houses, which are typical in Chile.⁷¹ This may be a pragmatic approach, but not the best in terms of preserving the national cultural heritage.⁷² A second issue related to the failure of many structures was the fact that recent high-rises, highways and bridges could not stand the trial. These cases are under investigation chances are that their constructors may have failed to comply with Chile's anti-seismic construction laws. On the other hand, the number of structures that broke down was low considering the magnitude of the quake. Also, the number of people who died inside these buildings was relatively low. For example, if compared with the earthquake on 12 May 2008, in Sichuan, China, some ten thousand young died in the collapse of 7 thousand classrooms and dormitories for students.⁷³ Nothing like that happened in Chile. Thus, although the damage in buildings also put a question mark against Chile's material modernization of the last decades, it is my opinion that the real issue at stake is whether the country's traditional mud constructions should be forbidden in the name of further safety, which state of the art construction methods may allow. On the other hand, as will be shown here, Japan's 2011 catastrophe showed that in some cases not even the best housing system can withstand the forces of nature.

As urban planner Pablo Allard asserts, Chile's anti-seismic construction laws prevent many people from dying in a strong earthquake if they are inside a building when it strikes. This was actually the case: although several structures collapsed, they

⁷⁰ 'Flawed Earthquake Predictions Gave Fukushima a False Sense of Security', *The Guardian*, 13 April 2011.

⁷¹ Diego Vergara R., Mayor of Paine, interviewed on 10 June 2011. 90 percent of the adobe buildings in Paine —those that had survived 1985 quake— collapsed in the 2010 quake. Vergara is against reconstructing in adobe. In his view, doing so will force their dwellers —mostly relatively poor peasants— to rebuild in twenty years' time when the next earthquake hits. Vergara is of the opinion that, 'typical adobe houses are for the wealthy. Nowadays you can build them with reinforced anti-seismic systems, but that is far too expensive for the average people living in rural Chile'.

⁷² J. García-Huidobro, H. Herrera and D. Mansuy, *op.cit.*, p. 156.

⁷³ 'Sichuan Earthquake', *The New York Times*, 6 May 2009.

were not many, and few people perished there. Allard explains that although more stringent anti-seismic measures can be adopted, the price of those buildings would be so high that it would make them unaffordable to most Chileans.⁷⁴ Also Rodrigo Mujica, from the Professional College of Engineers of Chile explains that ‘to have a building that might withstand with no problems a 9.0 quake, forget about terraces and windows: people would live in boxes’.⁷⁵ Along the same lines Daniel Kaufmann suggests that Chile’s good governance played a significant role in limiting the death toll resulting from the catastrophe. Although he acknowledges that grave blunders occurred during the earthquake, he is of the opinion that the quake highlighted two dimensions of this country’s governance: government effectiveness and control of corruption resulting in a successful design and adoption of better building codes of practice. In fact, some specific examples of some structures that fell down denote that non-compliance with the building codes and possible corruption are isolated rather than systematic events.⁷⁶ In the same way as the relatively low death toll resulting from the collapsed buildings increased Chile’s international reputation, sections 6.3 and 6.4 will study how both the earthquake and the rescue of the thirty-three miners trapped inside the *San José* mine ended up by being a blessing in disguise in terms of fostering Chile’s good name.

6.3 Taking Advantage of Catastrophe-led International Visibility

In the aftermath of the catastrophe Chileans worried about the images that people around the world were receiving about their country’s handling of the crisis, especially as regards the early mismanagement of emergency situations, the tsunami death toll, which could have been much lower, the looting which could have been prevented and the front-page photographs that went around the world showing caved-in structures. As this section will show, although all these negative issues were reported overseas, world opinion in general was well impressed by Chile’s diligence to start functioning again at a fairly fast pace. This view is in open contrast with Chile’s internal debate on how effective President Sebastián Piñera has been in the task of reconstructing Chile. Indeed, although a few months later most public services were functioning and emergency prefabricated housing had been given to practically everyone in need, Chileans

⁷⁴ ‘La Reconstrucción Según Allard’, *Qué Pasa*, 12 May 2010.

⁷⁵ ‘Los Mejores Rescatistas del Mundo’, *Qué Pasa*, 12 May 2010.

⁷⁶ D. Kaufmann (2010a), *op. cit.*

believed that the reconstruction pace was slow. This view clashes with the generally positive vision of foreigners of the handling of the catastrophe and reconstruction. Thus, comments in the sense that Haiti performed far worse in its reconstruction effort, or that—in spite of the crisis—Chile met most of its international commercial commitments, show that once again there is a rift between the self-perception of Chileans and what outsiders see. In fact, post-quake Chile was seen as organized, efficient and resilient by other countries. It is necessary to highlight the role played by *Fundación Imagen de Chile* which, for the first time in decades, had the upper hand in helping to influence the nation's international image in a positive way, even when the visibility window that opened for Chile after the catastrophe was an unhappy one: *al mal tiempo buena cara* or—as the idiomatic expression goes in English—when life gives you lemon, make lemonade.

After the first days of bewilderment, the response to the immediate needs of the worst hit areas quickened its pace. Thus, some twenty days after the earthquake, water and electricity were restored in most places, the main roads that link the country were made passable, the airport restarted its activities, and thousands of basic shelter homes were built.⁷⁷ Almost two months after the quake the government had installed 20,000 emergency lodgings, 18,000 emergency tents, and had delivered 75,000 blankets, 40,000 mattresses and 450,000 bags of non-perishable food.⁷⁸ Moreover, foreign governments as well as Chilean private citizens, churches, companies and different private conglomerates donated millions in goods and cash. The best example is the Telethon, which raised US\$ 56 million for the rebuilding of the affected areas.⁷⁹ As for public funds, Piñera's administration announced a US\$ 8.4 billion reconstruction plan to be implemented during his tenure,⁸⁰ US\$ 3 billion would come from extra transitory taxes on profits to be paid by major companies, 3 per cent in 2011 and 1.5 per cent in 2012.⁸¹ The mining sector was put on the spot by a 'voluntary' rise in royalties. The mining companies can refuse it, but at the expense of their public image.⁸²

⁷⁷ 'Chile's New Government', *The Economist*, 18 March 2010.

⁷⁸ 'Se ha Gastado un Tiempo Inútil en un Debate Dogmático', *El Mercurio*, 24 April 2010.

⁷⁹ 'Abrazo entre Bachelet y Piñera Marca Teletón para Ayudar a Damnificados', *El Mostrador*, 7 March 2010.

⁸⁰ 'A Balanced Reconstruction Plan', *The Economist*, 22 April 2010.

⁸¹ 'Piñera Busca Cerrar Críticas de la Alianza y Encabezará Lobby con la Concertación', *El Mercurio*, 20 April 2010.

⁸² 'A Balanced Reconstruction Plan', *The Economist*, *op. cit.*

In the same way as Bachelet's administration had to confront criticism for the way her government faced the quake and tsunami, Piñera's also had to deal with criticism of what the new opposition considered to be a slow recovery plan. Thus an Adimark opinion poll carried out after the rescue of the trapped miners showed that Piñera's approval rate had risen to 63 per cent although 59 per cent of respondents thought that the reconstruction after the catastrophe was too slow.⁸³ Since then, both the government and the opposition have engaged in mutual accusations as to how fast the reconstruction has been, compared to the 2007 earthquake which shook Chile's northern regions during Bachelet's tenure.⁸⁴ It is my opinion that the 27-F initial emergency stage was quite speedily handled. As for the proper reconstruction phase, I think it has been reasonably quick given 27-F's magnitude. Thus, already by June 2010, 94 per cent of the public infrastructure was working.⁸⁵ In August, 93 per cent of hospital beds were active again⁸⁶ and by November, 70, 342 subsidized homes had been distributed out of a total 100,000 promised for 2010.⁸⁷ Mining Minister Laurence Golborne's opinion interpreted well the views of the recently installed government. He was asked why the miners' rescue was so efficient compared to the alleged slow rhythm of post 27-F reconstruction. He explained that the case of the trapped pitmen was one of life or death: the government had to act as quickly as possible in order to rescue them alive. As for the rebuilding of post-catastrophe Chile, the magnitude of the event was far larger and the expenses greater: it is impossible to make the nation get back on its feet in a few months.⁸⁸

Interestingly, international opinion has been much more benign than Chileans themselves about the way in which Chile has dealt with the catastrophe and the reconstruction efforts. Kaufmann suggests that —although it may be of little consolation to those in the country— when a natural disaster of the magnitude of 27-F hits, the number of casualties would have been much higher in practically any other nation.⁸⁹ As for the images of looting and plundering, the fact that people gave back what they

⁸³ Evaluación del Gobierno Octubre 2010 in <http://www.adimark.cl/es/estudios/index.asp?id=77>

⁸⁴ 'Vecinos de Tocopilla Aseguran Estar Abandonados Tras Terremoto que los Afectó Hace 3 Años', *Radio Bío-Bío*, 22 July 2010.

⁸⁵ '94% de la Infraestructura Pública Dañada Está Operativa a 100 Días del Terremoto', *El Mercurio*, 7 Junio 2010.

⁸⁶ 'Reconstrucción: Más Luces que Sombras', *El Mercurio*, 27 August 2010.

⁸⁷ 'Reconstrucción: Valparaíso Lidera Entrega de Subsidios y Maule Muestra el Mayor Retraso', *El Mercurio*, 8 November 2010.

⁸⁸ 'Entrevista al Ministro de Minería', *El Mercurio*, 9 October 2010.

⁸⁹ D. Kaufmann (2010a) *op. cit.*

had stolen was widely covered and made a positive impact on world opinion.⁹⁰ *The Economist* pointed out that Chile has shown it is in far better shape to rebuild itself than it was after the previous big quake in 1985, not to mention the one in 1960, which was stronger.⁹¹ Several businessmen around the globe have been impressed with Chile's capacity to meet most of its business obligations in spite of the catastrophe. This is the case of wineries which, although they lost 12 per cent of their production were still able to deliver the wine they had promised. This sort of attitude conveyed the message that Chile had reacted quickly to the disaster and was an organized country.⁹² In this sense, the publication *América Economía* said that not an insignificant number of foreign investors were pleasantly surprised at the way Chile had reacted to the mega-quake, thus contributing to improve its image in the financial world.⁹³

Another issue that has helped Chile's image in terms of its handling of the crisis is comparisons with Haiti. Its capital, Port-au-Prince, suffered a 7.0 quake on the 7th of January 2009, little more than a month before Chile. The death toll was very high—more than 200,000 dead—and the city was severely hit. Although Chile's quake was 31 times stronger and released 178 times more energy, it was deeper into the earth, which absorbed part of the impact before it reached the foundations of the buildings'.⁹⁴ Also, in Haiti the epicentre was very close to its densely populated capital whilst in Chile it was farther away from Concepción, the biggest city in the zone. Finally, Chile is a seismic nation whilst Haiti is subject to infrequent tremors, although they may be violent when they occur. Thus Haiti is even less prepared than the Chile to face telluric disasters. Although there may be several mitigating factors in the case of Haiti, these do not properly account for how badly it has faced the catastrophe, especially when contrasted with Chile. Thus, six months after the respective quakes, Haiti was still on the ground⁹⁵ and on the eve of a cholera epidemic,⁹⁶ whilst 77 per cent of Chile's infrastructure (highways, bridges, airports) were functioning⁹⁷ and the country had successfully bypassed any disease outbreaks. Also, while Haiti is

⁹⁰ 'La Nueva Imagen de Chile', *América Economía*, 15 April 2010.

⁹¹ 'Chile's New Government', *The Economist*, *op. cit.*

⁹² 'La Nueva Imagen de Chile', *op. cit.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ 'Terremoto en Chile: Más Fuerte que el de Haití pero Menos Mortífero', *BBC Mundo*, 1 March 2010.

⁹⁵ 'Six Months On, Haiti Remains Covered in Rubble', *Der Spiegel*, 4 August 2010.

⁹⁶ 'La Epidemia de Cólera en Haití Continúa Diezmando la Población', *El País*, 19 November 2010.

⁹⁷ '77% de Obras Públicas del País ya Está en Pleno Funcionamiento', *El Mercurio*, 27 August 2010.

in need of a massive international aid effort,⁹⁸ Chile required international help only for specific needs.⁹⁹ Some of the reasons why Chile has been able to handle a worse catastrophe in a better way are that this country is richer and better prepared to face emergencies,¹⁰⁰ has stronger institutions and government, governability and public probity.¹⁰¹ What is more, although the Chilean emergency rescue teams which had been working in Haiti went back to their country after 27-F, the Chilean troops and other professionals working for MINUSTAH did not. This fact sent a message to the world community: Chile is trustworthy and abides by its international commitments.¹⁰²

The magazine *América Economía* polled 1,300 of its Latin American readers and found out that 48 per cent considered that Chile's international reputation had become stronger after the earthquake; 26 per cent said that there had been no change and the remaining 26 per cent thought that it had affected its image negatively.¹⁰³ Thus, the conclusion is that the resulting image of the post-quake country was that Chile is a resilient nation that stands up after a tragedy and keeps walking. Even further, the earthquake may have reinforced the reputation of Chile as a model country.¹⁰⁴ In my opinion, what can be considered the positive outcome of a negative scenario did not happen out of sheer luck or in a totally spontaneous way but was partly directed by *Fundación Imagen de Chile*, referred to in Chapter 4. In fact, as the earthquake made the breaking news of the mass media around the globe, its officials understood that the basic need in terms of image was to convey the message that Chile was getting back on its feet. They soon realized that people in general and the business community in particular had to get the fact that the quake and its damage had been severe but circumscribed: the tragedy was not going to impede the normal running of the country.¹⁰⁵

Taking advantage of world exposure —even if it was for tragic reasons— Chile's communicational efforts tended to convey the idea that the country functioned: through several campaigns and with little money —the foundation's budget for 2010 was US\$

⁹⁸ 'Frustration Sets In', *The Economist*, 29 July 2010.

⁹⁹ 'Canciller Reporta Ayuda Internacional Recibida por Terremoto', *La Tercera*, 2 March 2010.

¹⁰⁰ 'More on What Haiti and Chile (Don't) Have in Common', *Newsweek*, 28 February 2010.

¹⁰¹ D. Kaufmann (2010a), *op. cit.*

¹⁰² 'Rescatistas que Fueron a Haití Viajan a Concepción para Ayudar en Medio de la Catástrofe', *La Tercera*, 28 February 2010.

¹⁰³ 'La Nueva Imagen de Chile', *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁴ Alberto Padilla in 'La Nueva Imagen de Chile', *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁵ 'Jennyfer Salvo: Este Terremoto es una Oportunidad para Mostrar Chile', *El Mercurio*, 8 April 2010.

10 million, compared to Sweden's US\$ 100 million for the same purpose—¹⁰⁶ Chile kept informing the rest of the world that ships loaded with fruit, copper or wine were heading towards their commercial destinations. The campaigns also reported that basic services —water, roads, communications— were getting back to normal and that tourism was as good as ever in places not affected by the quake.¹⁰⁷ A second angle of the foundation's communicational strategy was to thank through publicity advertisements those countries which had sent their aid in the aftermath of the earthquake. The idea behind this campaign was to show emotion, and thus contribute to tone down Chile's image of coldness¹⁰⁸ which, as seen in Chapter 4, had been built on purpose throughout the 1980s

In my view, the first Chilean institution that deals exclusively with this country's international reputation, faced a hard task and succeeded. Although the earthquake was a sad event, the foundation was able to take advantage of a "window of visibility"¹⁰⁹ to transmit positive contents resulting in a helpful outcome in terms of image: *Fundación Imagen de Chile* was able to convey a positive message, something that had not been properly developed in past decades. Having said this, there is one aspect that the foundation was not able to tackle, that is, spreading Chile's good name among non-elite people around the planet. In fact, and understandably given their limited budget, the organization targeted the community that mattered most in immediate economic terms, i.e. the world financial and business elite which, as shown throughout this study, already knows about the country. Nevertheless, a second event that took place in 2010 —the cave-in of the *San José* mine and the thirty-three miners trapped underground— was to prove providential in that sense. What started as a tragedy, developed into one of the most powerful human-interest stories of hope and courage conveyed by the world media in the last decades, and gave Chile a unique chance to overcome the one image widely associated with the country: that of Pinochet.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Juan Gabriel Valdés S., speech delivered on 9 September 2010.

¹⁰⁷ J. G. Valdés. 'Imagen País: Chile Sigue en Pie', *La Tercera*, 27 March 2010.

¹⁰⁸ 'Jennyfer Salvo: Este Terremoto es una Oportunidad para Mostrar Chile', *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ 'Chile Será Recordado No por Pinochet, sino como Ejemplo de Unidad', *El Mercurio*, 16 October 2010.

6.4 The Rescue of the 33 Miners: the Miracle Which Was Not

The San José mine is located close to the city of Copiapó, in Chile's northern Atacama region. Although it had been previously closed for safety reasons, at the moment of the accident it was operating with due permission from the central government.¹¹¹ On the 5th of August, 2010 the collapse of one of the mine's corridors left thirty-three men 700 meters underground inside the pit. A few hours later a rescue team as well as Mining Minister Laurence Golborne arrived in the site.¹¹² For two days the team tried to reach the place where they thought the pitmen would be through a ventilation shaft, but a second cave-in thwarted their efforts.¹¹³ By then Piñera's government had decided to get fully involved in the rescue as there was no guarantee that the owners of the mine would have the will, economic means and technical capacity to attempt it on their own. As Golborne explained, it was a matter of life or death and the government just could not step aside and leave the miners to their.¹¹⁴ In my view, this was a political gamble:¹¹⁵ no one knew if the men were dead or alive and if the rescue attempts failed, Chileans might blame the government even if the accident was not entirely their responsibility: the permits to operate the mine had been granted by the previous government but had not been cancelled during Piñera's administration. It also gave the government a chance to divert public attention from the earthquake and reconstruction and it definitely allowed them to show efficiency.¹¹⁶

The next paragraphs describe and analyse one of the biggest international visibility windows Chile has ever had. In fact, the cave-in of the *San José* mine, the efforts to find the pitmen —dead or alive— and release them from the bowels of the earth, became a saga of heroism and humanity followed worldwide. After explaining briefly how the accident came about and the way in which the workers were searched for and found alive, I will go on to give several details as regards the organization of the rescue.

¹¹¹ San José mine was closed in 2007 after relatives of a miner who had died in an accident sued the company. Nevertheless, it was reopened in 2008 despite having failed to comply with all the safety regulations.

¹¹² President Sebastián Piñera was in Colombia on an official visit, which he suspended to go back to the mine and supervise the beginning of the search for the trapped men. See 'Piñera Vuela a Chile y Viajará a Zona del Accidente en la Mina San José', *La Tercera*, 7 August 2010.

¹¹³ 'Cómo Fueron los 17 Días de los Mineros', *El Mercurio*, 29 August 2010.

¹¹⁴ 'Entrevista al Ministro de Minería', *El Mercurio*, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁵ 'El Mundo Mira a Chile', *El Mercurio*, 16 October 2010.

¹¹⁶ 'La Moneda Apuesta a Reimpulso del Gobierno tras Superar Primera Fase de Rescate', *El Mercurio*, 23 August 2010.

In fact, the meticulous planning of their life underground as well as their liberation triggered almost unanimous world approval. I shall also refer to the live broadcasting of the rescue and its impact on Chile's international reputation. Four attributes were associated with the country by the international media mostly: efficiency, organizational capacity, solidarity and strong spirit/resilience. The rescue operation gave Chile a unique chance of positive world exposure. It also helped to give the average Chilean a 'face'. Indeed, although known by world elite sectors, Chile and its citizens had no personification: for the first time, billions of people around the globe had a picture of what they look like. Also for the first time in decades the country was given an opportunity to appear under a label other than Pinochet's. Definitely, the country had to take advantage of the opportunity it was given, and make an effort to reinforce the positive connotations attached to its reputation and avoid situations that could well reverse this stroke of good luck.

Soon after the cave-in, the members of the families of the thirty-three men started camping in the area next to the pit, in what was to be known as *Campamento Esperanza*, 'Camp Hope' in English. Also a considerable number of local and world media were covering the story, which appeared to be rather bleak. In fact, sixteen days had gone by since the initial accident and although several boreholes had been made, none of them had reached the place where it was hoped the miners might have taken shelter.¹¹⁷ On 22nd August —some seventeen days later— the probe finally hit the 700 meter mark, breaking through one of the cavities of the mine. The rescuers heard some noise but it was not until they lifted the probe that they found a note which read '*estamos bien en el refugio los 33*'.¹¹⁸ This was the definitive proof that the trapped men were alive. As soon as Piñera announced the news through the media, the information went around the world sparking off all sorts of expressions of joy: hundreds of Chileans went out in the streets waving Chilean flags and honking car horns and the churches rang their bells announcing the good news to one and all.¹¹⁹ As I shall suggest here, it was increasingly evident that the story had struck an emotional chord worldwide and was stirring strong nationalistic sentiments among Chileans.

In the coming days and weeks information kept coming up to the surface and this increased the media interest in the story. After hours of despair and bitter controversy

¹¹⁷ 'Las Impactantes Revelaciones del 'Cerebro' del Rescate, Sougarret', *El Mercurio*, 17 October 2010.

¹¹⁸ 'We are alright in the shelter, the thirty-three (of us)'.

¹¹⁹ 'Chile Escape Mine Shaft Lining Completed, *BBC News*, 11 October 2010.

among the trapped miners, finally good sense had prevailed and they started getting organized so as to survive as long as possible.¹²⁰ Led by the shift supervisor Luis Urzúa and backed by Florencio Avalos, the miners assigned themselves different tasks, dug for underground water sources, rationed their food, divided the different cavities as bed rooms, bathrooms and common room and organized shifts in order to look for ways of getting out of the mine.¹²¹ One of the aspects that made their discovery more outstanding was that, apart from the fact that they were all of them in reasonably healthy to withstand extreme conditions, they had had the spirit to impose on themselves a living arrangement based on order, discipline and hierarchy: serenity prevailed and saved them from perishing. Minister Golborne summarized those characteristics in one statement: ‘when I first spoke to them down in the mine I thought some would be dead and the rest in absolute despair or hysterical. Instead, I heard a voice saying ‘please wait, I will put you through to the boss!’”¹²² Then Urzúa took the communication line and told the Minister that they were fine, just waiting to be taken to the surface.¹²³

According to the initial rescue plan estimates, the miners would be out by Christmas, i.e. almost four months later. Nevertheless, as three simultaneous types of drilling plans were put into practice, the date for the probable evacuation started getting closer. The idea was to drill three shafts,¹²⁴ through one of which the miners would be lifted to the surface inside a steel capsule —called Phoenix— as if it was an elevator.¹²⁵ At the same time as the digging took place, the trapped pitmen were taken care of through diverse

¹²⁰ ‘Los Días en que la Desesperación y la Anarquía Reinaron en el Fondo de la Mina’, *El Mercurio*, 17 October 2010.

¹²¹ ‘Atrapados se las Ingeniaron Para Sobrevivir con Agua y Luz Obtenida de las Máquinas’, *El Mercurio*, 23 August 2010 and ‘La Nueva Carrera Contra el Tiempo que Inicia La Moneda’, *El Mercurio*, 29 August 2010.

¹²² ‘Entrevista al Ministro de Minería’, *El Mercurio*, *op. cit.*

¹²³ ‘Chile Miners: Rescued Foreman Luis Urzúa’s First Interview’, *The Guardian*, 14 October 2010.

¹²⁴ The three separate rescue plans were respectively called plan A, B and C. Plan A used an Australian built drilling rig, provided by a South African mining company. Plan B operated an air core drill owned by a Chilean-American joint venture and plan C a Canadian oil drilling rig.

¹²⁵ Three steel capsules were made by Chile’s Navy, with design help from NASA and inspired in the Dahlbusch Bomb, a torpedo-shaped cylinder developed in 1955 to rescue three miners trapped in a coal mine in Germany. The model had been used on other occasions, but never to lift so many people and from such depth down the earth. Also, Phoenix was geared with oxygen supply, video, voice communications, light, a strong roof to protect against rock falls, and a scuttle or trap with a mechanism to allow each miner to pull out of the capsule and clime down to the mine in case the device got stuck. For further information see ‘Uma Vitória Triunfal do Povo Chileno’, *Veja*, 14 October 2010.

and ingenious methods and high-technology gadgets, thus ensuring that they were well fed, entertained and able to communicate with their families.¹²⁶ Their health was closely monitored from above, outside the pit. In order to ensure their mental stability during the long weeks to come, they received psychological assistance and the whole crew was organized to work in shifts to assist in their own rescue.¹²⁷ The meticulous organization of their lives, the internal discipline with which the miners accepted the living arrangements, the considerable economic resources allocated to their rescue as well as the country's technical capacity were quite astonishing to those following the saga worldwide.¹²⁸ Indeed, if most people around the planet has associated *mestizo* faces —such as the miners'— with a poverty-stricken Latin America,¹²⁹ in this case the situation was different. For example, foreigners of elite business groups tended to think that Chile's relative successful political and economic story was partly due to the existence of a European enclave at the end of South America and they were surprised to observe that Chileans were as *mestizo* as the rest of the continent.¹³⁰ What was being informed and shown from down the mine also impressed Chileans. Firstly, the fact of having worldwide exposure by international media under a positive light made many of them feel proud of their nation.¹³¹ Then, images of the miners, of their rescuers and the dwellers of Camp Hope waving Chilean flags, singing the national anthem, eating typically Chilean food, highlighted the existence of a Chilean identity and fostered intense patriotic feelings around the country.¹³² Further still, as the broadcasts included working class people and individuals from upper social segments —such as government ministers and the President of the Republic— gave a sense of national unity and purpose.¹³³

¹²⁶ 'La Tecnología y el Ingenio Criollo se Unen para Facilitar el Rescate de los Mineros', *El Mercurio*, 7 October 2010.

¹²⁷ 'Surviving the Darkness', *Newsweek*, 14 September 2010.

¹²⁸ 'Chile's Mine Rescue. Plucked from the Bowels of the Earth', *The Economist*, 14 October 2010.

¹²⁹ 'La Verdad Incómoda de Guy Sorman', *El Mercurio*, 13 November 2010.

¹³⁰ Patricio Prieto S., (President TLC Consulting, company which provides legal and economic advice for the establishment of free trade agreements) interviewed on 8 July 2010.

¹³¹ J. Franklin (2011) *The 33: The Ultimate Account of the Chilean Miners' Dramatic Rescue*. New York: Bantam and 'El Histórico Rescate de los 33 Mineros', *Terra*, 13 October 2010.

¹³² 'Chile: A Lesson in Courage, Faith and Patriotism for the Entire World', Canada Free Press, 16 October 2010 in <http://www.canadafreepress.com/index.php/article/28827>

¹³³ 'Medios Extranjeros Reflejan el Cambio de Imagen de Chile tras Exitosa Operación de Salvataje', *La Tercera*, 15 October 2010 and 'Chile: A Lesson in Courage, Faith and Patriotism for the Entire World', *op. cit.*

As the three drills advanced it was becoming evident that the time for the liberation was getting closer and mid-October was mentioned as a possible date. Sure enough, plan B was making quick progress and the final date for the release of the trapped men was 12th October. Just before the extraction stage began, Golborne announced that it would take approximately an hour to bring each miner to the surface. Thus, the whole operation would last some 48 hours.¹³⁴ The recovery operation was dubbed *Operación San Lorenzo* after the miners' patron saint. Before lifting any of the workers a rescuer was lowered while the people at the top sang Chile's national anthem. Then the first miner started to be lifted out: Florencio Ávalos was chosen because he was physically and mentally strong, so that—if anything should go wrong during the ascent—he would be able to deal with the difficulties. As for the last miners that were to be released, they also were the toughest, who would not despair having to wait until the end. Foreman Urzúa would be the last miner to be lifted out.

Ávalos' ascent—a little after midnight on 13 October—was broadcast live from inside the mine and the surface whilst some 2 billion people¹³⁵ watched his release on the internet, television and mobile phones: only some football games during the 2010 World Cup and Barack Obama's ascension to the presidency had been followed by a similar number of people on the web.¹³⁶ 'The sheer emotion of watching the first miner, Florencio Avalos, emerge from the dark depths of the San José mine, and embrace his wife and crying boy, is difficult to translate into words'.¹³⁷ As dramatic as the Apollo 13 return journey,¹³⁸ the rescue triggered deep positive emotions in literally billions of people, as the worldwide media started reporting. 'When just recovering from the wounds of an earthquake, the Chilean people went in the rescue of human values'¹³⁹ or 'many across the globe are watching the Chile miners' rescue operation. As we watch the miners emerging out of FENIX, yes, humanity survives'.¹⁴⁰ As will be analyzed below, Chile's 'good deed' and its effort to alleviate the anguish and sufferings of the miners and their families, helped to revamp the country's reputation:

¹³⁴ 'Chile Escape Mine Shaft Lining Completed', *op. cit.*

¹³⁵ 'La Emotiva Jornada en que se Comenzó a Cerrar la Epopeya del Norte', *El Mercurio*, 18 October 2010.

¹³⁶ 'Chile es Reconocido por la Opinión Pública Mundial, No Sólo por las Elites', 25 October 2010 in <http://www.fundacionimagedechile.cl/News.aspx?id=703&sec=18&t=>

¹³⁷ D. Kaufman (2010b) 'The Rescue of the Miners in Chile is no Miracle' in <http://thekaufmannpost.net/the-rescue-of-the-miners-in-chile-is-no-miracle/>

¹³⁸ 'Chile es Reconocido por la Opinión Pública Mundial, No Sólo por las Elites', *op. cit.*

¹³⁹ 'Ricardo Trotti: el Rescate de lo Humano', *El Nuevo Herald*, 16 October 2010.

¹⁴⁰ 'Chile Miners Rescue: Your Reaction', *BBC News*, 13 October 2010.

For now, Chile is the fortunate country that has made its presence felt globally by virtue of the softest of soft powers: through the warmth and solidarity it radiated during the emergency and the way it coped at once with the rescue and the intensity of the world's gaze (...) Chile's rescue that riveted the world will make for an infinitely more attractive brand than bullying or force of arms'.¹⁴¹

Two thousand journalists representing some 300 media teams from 39 countries were present during the rescue of each of the miners,¹⁴² ensuring an extensive media coverage of this drama that might well have ended in tragedy and instead evolved into a saga.¹⁴³ If Chile had paid for the information that appeared on television, radio, the internet and press, the bill would have added up to between US\$ 2,000,000,000¹⁴⁴ and US\$ 2,383,000,000.¹⁴⁵ A study carried out by *Fundación Imagen de Chile* reports that from July 22nd to October 20th, some 64,348 of press articles were published featuring Chilean miners. On the rescue day the articles topped 10,036 and dropped slightly the coming day to 7,137.¹⁴⁶ The countries that led in number of articles were the United States, China, Spain, Germany, Brazil, France, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and Mexico.¹⁴⁷ As for the internet, the same report states that more than 4 million websites were visited at the beginning of the rescue operation. Ustream —a live interactive broadcast platform— totalled some 5.3 million viewings of the rescue on October 12th and 13th. Twitter reported more than 2 million tweets related to it on October 13th alone, and 1,240 Facebook messages per minute were posted.¹⁴⁸

It will be impossible to get an absolutely accurate figure of how many people saw, watched, read and commented on the rescue of the thirty-three Chilean miners. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Chile had a unique chance of making itself known around the world and giving its international reputation a facelift As Juan Gabriel

¹⁴¹ 'Mary Dejevsky: Chile's New Global Brand for Success', *The Independent*, 15 October 2010.

¹⁴² 'El Histórico Rescate de los 33 Mineros', *Terra*, 13 October 2010.

¹⁴³ D. Kaufmann (2010b), *op. cit.* and 'Chile es Reconocido por la Opinión Pública Mundial, No Sólo por las Elites', *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁴ 'Cobertura del Rescate Minero Equivale a Una Campaña de Imagen País de Hasta US\$ 2,000,000,000', *El Mercurio*, 17 October 2010.

¹⁴⁵ 'Cobertura del Rescate de los 33 fue Valorada en US\$ 2,383,000,000' 25 October 2010 in <http://www.fundacionimagendechile.cl/News.aspx?id=702&sec=1&t=>

¹⁴⁶ 'Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33', 25 October 2010 in <http://www.fundacionimagendechile.cl/News.aspx?id=704&sec=1&t=>

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Valdés had pointed out some months before, countries are known not for what they say about themselves but for what they do.¹⁴⁹ *Operación San Lorenzo* was the action that Valdés —as head of *Fundación Imagen de Chile*— was looking for: ‘Chile won the lottery in terms of promotion’.¹⁵⁰ The operation in itself had high levels of international approval and left several positive attributes associated with the name of Chile. An analysis of some 10 thousand publications in English containing concepts such as ‘Chile’, ‘Chile live’, ‘Chilean Miners’ or ‘Chilean’, shows that 92 per cent of the references were positive, and only 8 per cent negative.¹⁵¹ Even this small percentage did not have an unenthusiastic connotation to the rescue itself, but to other aspects, such as the way the media had dealt with the information.¹⁵²

Diverse studies and articles state that efficiency, organizational capacity, strong spirit and solidarity were some of the attributes linked to Chile after the rescue.¹⁵³ Interestingly, all of them have been mentioned in one way or another along each chapter of this thesis. In my view, they are psychological traits present in Chile’s identity, formed through the country’s history. It is not as if Chile is the most effective, organized, resilient or cohesive country in Latin America, let alone in the world, but I believe that its citizens have more or less developed those traits and it is normally in times of catastrophe that they come to the fore and are perceived by others. In this sense Michael Moore —an American filmmaker— commented that next time that his country had to tackle an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico¹⁵⁴ the United States government should call Chile: they would know what to do.¹⁵⁵ In fact, the way the Chilean government handled the miners’ rescue left the idea of professional and organizational efficiency as well as political leadership by the authorities.¹⁵⁶ Thus, the media in general highlighted Chile’s expertise —mainly its engineers— professionalism

¹⁴⁹ Juan Gabriel Valdés S. (Minister of Foreign Affairs, June 1999 to March 2000. Executive Director *Fundación Imagen de Chile*), interviewed on 10 December 2008.

¹⁵⁰ S. Anholt in ‘Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33’, 25 October 2010 in [http://www.fundacionimagedechile.cl/News.aspx?id=704&sec=1&xt=](http://www.fundacionimagedechile.cl/News.aspx?id=704&sec=1&xt=,), *op. cit.*

¹⁵¹ ‘Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33’, *op. cit.*

¹⁵² ‘The Media Circus at Chile’s San José Mine’, *op. cit.*

¹⁵³ ‘Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33’, *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁴ It refers to the most serious accidental oil spill in the history of the oil industry. It followed an explosion on a British Petroleum oil drilling platform located in the Gulf of Mexico. The accident caused the death of 11 workers. The spill lasted for three months and discharged some 4.9 million barrels into the ocean.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33’, *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

and competence,¹⁵⁷ the careful and meticulous preparation of the rescue¹⁵⁸ as well as the thoroughness with which the miners' health was monitored whilst still trapped.¹⁵⁹ The media were also struck by the availability of high-tech equipment such as special mobile phones from Korea, flexible optic fibre from Germany, drilling devices from Australia and Canada and advice from NASA.¹⁶⁰ As President Piñera put it to the French press, 'what appeared to be an impossible mission has been converted into a victory of faith and hope over anguish and pessimism. It has also been the triumph of excellence and commitment'.¹⁶¹

Resources were not spared and neither was state of the art technology: some US\$ 20,000,000 was the total cost of the operation.¹⁶² In sharp contrast with what happened in Atacama, other mining accidents with unfortunate results started coming to the fore: 2006 Mexico Pasta de Conchos methane explosion,¹⁶³ diverse accidents in China and Russia¹⁶⁴ as well as in New Zealand¹⁶⁵ have been compared to San José's cave-in and its happy ending.¹⁶⁶ Competence and ingenuity¹⁶⁷ were also mentioned in connection with *Operación San Lorenzo*. There were also references to the good sense in accepting international help, and to the cooperation and resources from companies and individuals from around the world,¹⁶⁸ although it was clear that it was the Chilean professionals that grabbed the bull by its horns.¹⁶⁹ As President Piñera pointed out,

¹⁵⁷ 'Medios Extranjeros Reflejan el Cambio de Imagen de Chile tras Exitosa Operación de Salvataje', *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁸ 'Miner's Rescue in Chile: an Unprecedented Rescue Begins', *The Santiago Times*, 10 September 2010.

¹⁵⁹ 'Trapped Chile Miners get Supplies', *BBC News*, 24 August 2010 and 'Chile Miners Face Four-Month Wait for Rescue', *AP-MSNBC*, 23 August 2010.

¹⁶⁰ 'El Mundo Mira a Chile', *El Mercurio*, 16 October 2010.

¹⁶¹ 'Sebastián Piñera: Le Chili n'est plus le Mème', *Le Monde*, 19 October 2010.

¹⁶² 'Rescatar a los Mineros Chilenos Costó 20 Millones de Dólares', *El Comercio*, 26 November 2010.

¹⁶³ 'Chile Miners Rescue: Mexico Rues Lack of 2006 Disaster Rescue', *The Guardian*, 14 October 2010.

¹⁶⁴ 'La Emotiva Jornada en que se Comenzó a Cerrar la Epopeya del Norte', *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁵ 'Tragedy in New Zealand. No Miracle Left', *The Economist*, 25 November 2010.

¹⁶⁶ Months later, Colombia and Bolivia asked Chilean rescue teams to go and help save people who had been trapped in a mine in the former and in a building in the latter. See 'Prosiguen Tareas de Rescate en Santa Cruz. "Topos" Mexicanos y Chilenos Inician Búsqueda de Sobrevivientes de Derrumbe en Edificio', *Los Tiempos*, 28 January 2011. 'Brigada de Rescatistas Chilenos Parte a Colombia a Labores de Salvataje por Tragedia en Mina', *La Tercera*, 26 January 2011.

¹⁶⁷ 'Mary Dejevsky: Chile's New Global Brand for Success', *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁸ 'Miner's Rescue in Chile: An Unprecedented Rescue Begins', *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

‘Chilean engineers, rescuers and workers have shown what they are capable of’.¹⁷⁰ In few words, the national image coming out of the rescue operation was that of a serious, well prepared and capable country, exactly the same message that Chile had tried to convey when featuring an iceberg in Expo Seville almost twenty years before.¹⁷¹

The last time that Chile had got such worldwide attention was earlier in the year when a monster earthquake, coupled by a tsunami, struck the south of the country. While the outcome of the current episode is uplifting, contrasting with the tragic loss of hundreds of lives due to the tsunami and earthquake, both episodes have highlighted the strength of governance in Chile.¹⁷²

In fact, the political leadership of the Chilean authorities is one of the angles that was highlighted internationally¹⁷³ both during the earthquake¹⁷⁴ and the rescue operation.¹⁷⁵ Although both the Concertación and Alianza have been criticized in some aspects for the way in which they handled these disasters, the opinion of other Latin Americans has acted as a counterpoint: unfortunately, citizens from other nations of the continent seem to consider that if any of the two events had occurred in their respective countries, the outcome would have been less efficient, thus resulting in more deaths.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, some non-Latin American media have catalogued Chile as an efficient and modern country incidentally inserted in a badly organized neighbourhood.¹⁷⁷ This fact has increased Chile’s sense of exceptionality, a deep-felt sentiment held true by Chileans from the eve of their history, as seen in all the previous chapters.

Chapters 3 and 4 referred to a national and international Chilean identity trait developed in the past decades with the adoption of market-oriented policies. In my view, efficiency and organizational capacity and image —both connected to a neo-liberal ethos— have a far older root in the country. At the same time, it is undeniable that the evolution of a market economy in Chile and its integration into the world markets have reinforced the local culture of order and endeavour and the consequent

¹⁷⁰ ‘Chile’s Mine Rescue. Plucked from the Bowels of the Earth’, *The Economist*, 14 October 2010.

¹⁷¹ B. Subercaseaux S. (1996) *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁷² D. Kaufmann (2010b), *op. cit.*

¹⁷³ Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33’, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁴ D. Kaufmann (2010a), *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁵ ‘El Mundo Mira a Chile’, *El Mercurio*, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁶ ‘Luis Noé Ochoa. Aquí Pelamos el Cobre’, *El Tiempo de Colombia*, 16 October 2010 and ‘La Nueva Imagen de Chile’, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁷ ‘Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33’, *op. cit.*

external and internal image of seriousness and efficiency. Thus, it was little wonder that President Barak Obama's phrase 'do things the Chilean way' meaning doing things properly, surprised the Chileans themselves. In fact, for years that expression had been used in Chile meaning quite the opposite: doing things in a sloppy manner.¹⁷⁸ Interestingly, in my view, the newly inaugurated Aliancista government tried to identify neo-liberal efficiency with their administration, as if the past administrations had been neither neo-liberal nor efficient, and as if the real and only heirs of the Chicago Boys' technical efficacy were they.

Chile has long been a mining country. Miners working the harsh terrain of the Atacama are part of the national self-image in a country that thinks of itself as having snatched prosperity from adversity, weather, earthquakes or mining accidents. But the rescue of the thirty-three miners has also struck another chord among Chileans —that their country 'does things well' (...) Mr Piñera has promised to set Chile on the path to becoming a developed country by 2018, the Bicentennial of the decisive battle in its struggle for independence from Spain. Over the past three months it has certainly behaved like one.¹⁷⁹

Having analyzed the way in which foreigners and nationals perceive Chile as efficient and organized, on its way to full socio-economic development, I shall now focus on the Chileans' perception of being strong and supportive of those who are suffering. As mentioned in previous chapters, Chile seems to be a resilient nation as it has historically been doomed to deal with disasters,¹⁸⁰ seizing success from hardship.¹⁸¹ On the occasion of the miners' rescue, this alleged Chilean fortitude was associated with the toughness of the pitmen, as if all Chileans shared the mentality and physical strength of these workers: for some weeks to be Chilean was a synonym of being one of the 33 miners. In fact, that particular group of people is normally disciplined¹⁸² and 'hard as granite',¹⁸³ those being necessary conditions to carry out their job. Nevertheless, although there is evidence to show that the thirty-three miners gave visibility to Chileans —before the rescue very few people on the planet were able to describe

¹⁷⁸ 'La Emotiva Jornada en que se Comenzó a Cerrar la Epopeya del Norte', *El Mercurio*, 18 October 2010, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁹ 'Chile's Mine Rescue. Plucked from the Bowels of the Earth', *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁰ 'Eugenio Tironi. Nueva Etapa', *El Mercurio*, 26 October 2010.

¹⁸¹ 'Chile's Mine Rescue. Plucked from the Bowels of the Earth', *op. cit.*

¹⁸² 'Chile Miners Must Move Tons of Rocks in own Rescue', *Associated Press*, 29 August 2010.

¹⁸³ 'Ben MacIntre. Los 33 y la Veta Minera de Chile y Gran Bretaña', *El Mercurio*, 17 October 2010.

or even imagine what a Chilean looked like—¹⁸⁴ in my opinion this does not mean that the rest of their fellow countrymen share their psychological and physical traits. On the other hand, it is true that Chile has always developed mining activities which may have helped to transmit the pitmen spirit to other sectors of society in the shape of entrepreneurial spirit and as the capacity to cope during cycles of prosperity and poverty.¹⁸⁵ Regardless of whether people around the globe started perceiving Chileans as miner-like, I believe that Chileans are a resilient people, although more in the sense of capable of getting back on their feet after a catastrophe than as self-sacrificing or physically and psychologically strong.

Yet another attribute that was worldwide associated with Chileans during the rescue from the *San José* mine was solidarity¹⁸⁶, in the sense of the capacity of working together to overcome adversity.¹⁸⁷ In my opinion, the same that happened with the attribute of strength, world opinion transferred what they saw in the trapped miners—how they worked together to save one another with so much nobility—¹⁸⁸ to the rest of the citizenry. Although I think that this solidarity was more visible in the aftermath of the earthquake, when those less affected by the catastrophe helped the afflicted with money, work and emotional support, it is also true that the rescue of the thirty-three showed the significant capacity of Chileans to unite in sympathy. Material support came mostly from the central authority, which expressed its commitment to rescuing the workers and private companies, which helped with money to carry out the operation.¹⁸⁹ This mix of efficiency and care, high-technology rescue operations and concern for human life, became a reputational windfall for Chile: this was given the chance to join countries such as Canada or Finland that make a benevolent impression on visitors while showing competence in the way their nations are run.¹⁹⁰

Another aspect common to Chileans, which was perceived overseas, was that of patriotism, union and love for their country. The following comment by a Spanish writer, is a good summary of that perception: ‘That admirable union, above tendencies

¹⁸⁴ ‘La Verdad Incómoda de Guy Sorman’, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁵ ‘Alegría Nacional, Prioridad del Rescate. Reconocimientos y Responsabilidades’, *El Mercurio*, 23 August 2010.

¹⁸⁶ F. Pujol, ‘Los Beneficios del Rescate de los 33 Mineros Irán a la Marca Chile’, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁷ ‘Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33’, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁸ ‘Medios Extranjeros Reflejan el Cambio de Imagen de Chile tras Exitosa Operación de Salvataje’, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁹ ‘Alegría Nacional, Prioridad del Rescate. Reconocimientos y Responsabilidades’, *El Mercurio*, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁰ ‘Mary Dejevsky: Chile’s New Global Brand for Success’, *op. cit.*

and ideologies, their national anthem sung with emotion by the miners and their President outside the mine, once duty had been fulfilled, has made us Spaniards see that a nation with only two hundred years of history can be more deep-rooted than ours, which is millenary'.¹⁹¹ It appears that foreign journalists were positively impressed to see political opponents —such as President Piñera and Senator Isabel Allende, one of Salvador Allende's daughters— making their best efforts to contribute to the workers' rescue.¹⁹² Moreover, the political gain of rightwing sectors was important as in Chile miners have been traditionally linked to leftwing sectors. This time it was a rightist government that came to their aid. A final idea that the international media transmitted was that of solidarity through religion. In fact, although the liberation of the miners was no miracle,¹⁹³ nevertheless many Chileans believe that God helped. For example, André Sougarrett, the engineer in charge of the rescue team, declared that 'strange' things had happened that had helped them find the miners at the beginning of the saga.¹⁹⁴ Thus, the belief that the hand of God was present during the operation is something many Chileans believe to be true. Thus, it is not strange that an important current of solidarity should have found its niche in prayer,¹⁹⁵ a fact that was perceived as surprising and unexpected in some countries.¹⁹⁶

As media studies expert Frances Pujol had predicted, the biggest winner of the saga in terms of reputation was the Chile brand.¹⁹⁷ In fact, although some of the miners had more media exposure than others, in the end, their value in communicational terms is related to the group of thirty-three and their rescue rather than in one individual. At the same time, their story is associated with Chile, thus transferring to the country its positive connotations. Interestingly, the Chilean flag started to be widely recognized¹⁹⁸ and sales of Chilean wine overseas rose by 25 per cent after the rescue,¹⁹⁹ showing that the impact on Chile's brand had been positive. To confirm these facts, Future Brand 2010 Country Brand Index ranked Chile in the fortieth place, which is important

¹⁹¹ 'Alfonso Usía: Disculpas Urgentes', *ABC de España*, 15 October 2010.

¹⁹² 'Medios Extranjeros Reflejan el Cambio de Imagen de Chile tras Exitosa Operación de Salvataje', *op. cit.*

¹⁹³ D. Kaufmann (2010b) *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁴ 'Las Impactantes Revelaciones del 'Cerebro' del Rescate, Sougarret', *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁵ 'Il Ritorno Alla Vita dei Minatori E' il 'Miracolo delle Ande', *La Repubblica*, 13 October 2010.

¹⁹⁶ F. Pujol, 'Los Beneficios del Rescate de los 33 Mineros Irán a la Marca', *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ 'Chile es Reconocido por la Opinión Pública Mundial, No Sólo por las Elites', *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁹ 'Ventas de Vino Chileno Aumenta tras el Rescate de los Mineros', *Vinos Revista Digital*, 18 October 2010.

progress after 2009's fifty-ninth place.²⁰⁰ This nineteen-place leap is mainly explained by *Operación San Lorenzo*. This report says, 'the *San José* miners' rescue became a global news event generating extraordinary goodwill for President Piñera and branding Chile. This, coupled with growing economic stability, makes Chile a brand to watch in the region'.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, although the word 'success' has been attached to 'Chile' in recent months,²⁰² Chile's good reputation should be handled with care. In fact, an over-exploitation of the miners' saga in communicational terms may end up by being tedious. Also, the fact that a visibility window opened makes Chile more visible in other areas. Thus, internal problems —such as the ongoing Mapuche conflict— can harm Chile's image more than before the rescue.²⁰³ Also, the fact of having gained world attention in a limited space in time —mainly on 13th, 14th and 15th October 2010— triggers the configuration of almost indelible images and perceptions attached to the country and its people.²⁰⁴ So, if future actions or events in Chile oppose those concepts, the damage to Chile's brand could be considerable.²⁰⁵

Concluding Remarks

The last chapter of this study concentrates on two events that marked Chile's Bicentennial celebration: 27-F and the miners' rescue operation. Both made an impact on Chile's path towards socio-economic development, highlighted and reinforced some of the nation's identity traits and helped to change the country's international reputation, making it known to all sorts of people, not only to a world business elite. Section 6.1 describes February's quake and tsunami, presents a brief historical review of the main similar phenomena throughout Chile's history. Then section 6.2 studies the deficiencies of Chile's technical capacity to face a mega-quake, the post-catastrophe response and the tsunami warning fiasco. Also the disorganization with which initial assistance was delivered and the tardiness to send military personnel into the areas affected are studied. On a more positive note, section 6.2 addresses facts such as the solidarity shown by Chileans during

²⁰⁰ 'Rescate de Mineros Destaca en Ascenso de 19 puestos de Chile en Ranking Marca País', *El Mercurio*, 16 November 2010.

²⁰¹ 'Rising Stars for 2010', Future Brand in <http://www.futurebrand.com/news/press-releases/launch-country-brand-index-2010/>

²⁰² F. Pujol, 'Los Beneficios del Rescate de los 33 Mineros Irán a la Marca', *op. cit.*

²⁰³ Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33', *op. cit.*

²⁰⁴ F. Pujol, 'Los Beneficios del Rescate de los 33 Mineros Irán a la Marca Chile', *op. cit.*

²⁰⁵ Oportunidades y Alertas a Propósito del Rescate de los 33', *op. cit.* and F. Pujol, 'Los Beneficios del Rescate de los 33 Mineros Irán a la Marca Chile', *op. cit.*

the catastrophe. Section 6.3 deals with Chile's international image during the post-quake period, and concludes that the world opinion was very much impressed by Chile's fast recovery when it attempted to return to normal life. The nation was perceived as being organized, efficient and resilient. Chapter 6 also highlights the role played by *Fundación Imagen de Chile* in order to help to improve the nation's global reputation. Mainly aimed at studying the way Chile's world image behaved, section 6.4 describes the accident in *San José* mine, the search for the miners and their final rescue. *Operación San Lorenzo's* live transmission had an impact on Chile's global image. Curiously, the four qualities that were attached to the country during the rescue —i.e. efficiency, organizational capacity, solidarity and strong spirit/resilience—were practically the same as those ascribed to Chile in the aftermath of the earthquake.

The chapter concludes that —although the country was better prepared to confront the 2010 earthquake compared to 1960 and 1985— Chile is still under-equipped, has an inadequate emergency protocol, communications and power systems. Although the response to the emergency was slow on the part of the central authorities, the chapter also concludes that overseas Chile's response to the disaster was perceived as adequate. It is necessary to highlight the role played by *Fundación Imagen de Chile* which, for the first time in decades, had the upper hand in helping to positively influence the nation's international image even though the visibility window that opened for Chile after the catastrophe was a sorry one. The same can be said of the miners' rescue which gave the country an exceptional opportunity for positive world exposure. Moreover, for the first time, billions of people around the world are now able to recognize the Chilean flag and have an idea of what a Chilean might look like. Also, the country was given the chance to divorce itself from Pinochet's figure.

Chapter 1 started the exploration of the three strands studied in this thesis: national identity, international reputation and social change. The first chapter attempted to establish some of Chile's identity patterns and Chapter 2 intended to connect them to historical events that might have helped their evolution. Thus, the chapter points to some historical particularities which triggered the idea of being an isolated piece of land as well as the notion of being an exceptional and democratic nation with a distinctive culture of order and endeavour. Chapter 3 studied the introduction of neo-liberalism during the military dictatorship, the change in the country's international reputation, its socio-economic transformation and other changes in the Chileans' self-image and identity features. Then Chapter 4 focused on the twenty-year period of Concertacionista governments, analysing the nation's social, identity and national image shifts. Chapter 5 describes further how Chile changed in terms of upward social mobility, its shift in

values and self-image. Finally, Chapter 6 studied 2010, which happened to be a key year in terms of global exposure and the improvement of Chile's international brand. One of the chapter's conclusions is that some of the traces of Chileanness have not disappeared. For example, its citizens' resilient endurance in adversity —instilled into their memories through centuries of war, poverty, isolation and earthquakes— is a psychological feature that modernity has not washed away. This and other aspects will be further referred to in the coming conclusions.