

Revista Punto Final, A Story of a Militant and Radical Journalism

Dr. Antonio CASTILLO ROJAS¹

Abstract

Revista Punto Final - literally translated as “Full Stop” magazine - was founded in 1965 in Santiago, Chile’s capital. In spite of its enforced closure during the military dictatorship of Pinochet (1973-1989), *Revista Punto Final* has been one of the most resilient and long-lived Latin American left-wing publications.

The magazine was born in the midst of the Latin American political effervescency of the 1960s. The founders were Manuel Cabieses and Mario Díaz Barriento, two Chilean journalists whose aim was to build a progressive journalistic platform capable of actively participating in Chile’s social and political changes.

In the light of its mission *Punto Final* has not only recorded of some of the major events that have defined Chile and Latin America, it has also been an active protagonist in the historical vicissitudes the region has endured since the 1960s. Much of the material used in this article - a historical account of *Punto Final* – was obtained in a series of interviews with Manuel Cabieses.

Keywords: *Revista punto final, latin American journalism, left wing journalism, revolutionary journalism, radical journalism.*

¹RMIT University, Department of Journalism, Australia

Bir Militan ve Radikal Gazetecilik Hikayesi: Revista Punto Final

Öz

Revista Punto Final – kelimenin tam anlamıyla “Full Stop” – dergisi 1965 yılında Şili’nin başkenti Santiago’da kuruldu. Pinochet’in askeri diktatörlüğü döneminde (1973-1989) kapanmaya zorlanmasına rağmen *Revista Punto Final* Latin Amerika’nın en uzun süreli sol yayınlarından biridir.

Dergi 1960’ların ortasında Latin Amerika’nın siyasi kötümserlik ortamında doğdu. Derginin kurucuları iki Şilili gazeteci Manuel Cabieses ve Mario Diaz Barriento’dur. Dergiyi çıkarmaktaki amaçları Şili’nin sosyal ve politik değişimlerine etkin bir şekilde katılabilecek ilerici bir gazetecilik platformu oluşturmaktır.

Punto Final misyonu doğrultusunda yalnızca Şili ve Latin Amerika’da meydana gelen büyük olaylardan herhangi birini kaydetmekle kalmamış, ayrıca bölgenin 1960’lardan beri sürdürdüğü tarihsel değişimler içinde aktif bir kahramanı olmuştur.

Bu çalışmadan yer alan içeriğin çoğu - Punto Final’in tarihi hesabı - Manuel Cabieses ile yapılan bir dizi röportajda elde edilmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Revista punto final, latin Amerika gazeteciliği, sol kanat gazeteciliği, devrimci gazetecilik, radikal gazetecilik.*

Introduction

Latin American left-wing journalism has been closely linked to the progressive and radical movements of the region. It is journalism whose fundamental objective is the promotion and the articulation of profound social changes in a region characterised by class inequalities, exploitation and marginalisation of the poor. The objective of this article is to historically document the work of “Punto Final” – Full Stop - the oldest left-wing magazine in Latin America. Methodologically, this article relies on a series of interviews with Manuel Cabieses, the founder of the magazine. This methodology is informed by the traditional use of oral history as a tool of research and inquiry.

In the streets of Santiago

Manuel Cabieses, a towering six-foot man, doesn't remember whether it was he or Mario Díaz Barriento, nicknamed the "short one", who came up with the name for the magazine. "Mario and I enjoyed walking and talking in the down town streets of Santiago – that was in the 1960s - when one day while we passed nearby the Falabella department store in Ahumada Street one of us came up with the name of the magazine that we wanted to create," remembers Manuel Cabieses (M. Cabieses, interview, September 30, 2017).

On September 15, 1965 *Punto Final* appeared for the first time on the streets of Santiago. Since – as Cabieses said – "few places were keen to stock it" he and Díaz Barriento carried a bundle of copies of the magazine to Café Haiti, a traditional hangout for journalists, intellectuals, academics, politicians and students in Ahumada Street, in the center of Santiago.

"There we sold the magazine verbally, like newspaper boys", Cabieses said (Interview, 2017). It was sold for \$1 Escudo, the old Chilean currency. It was such an odd spectacle – the two men selling the magazine loudly at the entry of the café – that journalist Augusto Carmona – who was a friend of them and was then head of Channel 9 television news sent a crew to film the spectacle. "It gave massive publicity for magazine," Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, interview, September 30, 2017).

The founders –Cabieses who was then 32 and Díaz Barriento 45 – sought to create a publication where stories would be covered in depth "until their very end" – hence the name *Punto Final* or Full Stop. Both men belonged to the Chilean left wing intelligentsia and saw journalism as a powerful tool for revolutionary change. The magazine wanted – as Cabieses said – "to push the public debate to the left (M. Cabieses, interview, September 30, 2017).

Cabieses was a journalist who developed his skills on the job. He didn't attend any journalism school. In his book – *Autografía de un Rebelde* (Autobiography of a Rebel)- he said his truly journalism school "was the union newspapers where I began my career" (Cabieses, 2015: 29). Díaz Barriento, on the other hand, had begun his journalism career at *El Mercurio*

de Valparaiso, a newspaper founded in 1827 and one of the oldest in Latin America. Later on, he became chief of staff of the now defunct newspaper *Última Hora* where Cabieses also worked as a journalist.

The money for the magazine came from the wallets of Cabieses and Díaz Barriento; from their earnings from *Última Hora*. The magazine was also financed by two humble advertisements. One was for a bed factory owned by the brother in law of Díaz Barriento and the second for a delicatessen owned by Cabieses's brother in law. However, after issue Nº 8 Cabieses and Díaz Barrientos decided to stop accepting advertisements (Fernández, 2011: 77). This was due to the non-commercial, independent and “revolutionary philosophy” both men wanted to give to the magazine. “*Punto Final* has been, since its foundation, an independent publication in all senses,” said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, January 28, 2018)

In its early manifestation *Punto Final* was no more than an A4 booklet. It was printed in the now closed Sociedad Impresora Horizonte – a printing business owned by the Communist Party. Later on, after it became a regular fortnightly publication in 1966 - the magazine was printed by Prensa Latino Americana, a printing place owned by the Chilean Socialist Party.

The first issue - *Punto Final* Nº1- was exclusively devoted to one story – the October 1965 sinking of the *Janequeo*, a Chilean navy tugboat. The shipwreck killed 50 sailors. The author of the piece was Miguel Torres, a Chilean police journalist who offered the story to *Punto Final* when his own publication refused to publish it.

The cover of the first issue of the magazine depicts a tugboat struggling against the wild wind and waves. It was the artwork of Enrique Cornejo – nicknamed Penike - who was the art director of the magazine until its forced closure soon after Pinochet's 1973 military coup.

The publication of Torre's story was not only a major scoop for the nascent magazine but it also reflected the fundamental concept behind its creation. “We aspired to establish a space where journalists would be able to publish their work free from censorship and from commercial demands,” Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017)

A militant magazine

Cabieses said the triumphant 1959 Cuban Revolution inspired the publication of the magazine. And in some respects it emerged – paraphrasing Argentina’s scholar Beatriz Sarlo – from the political “conjuncture” of the period (1992:10). “It was this historical event that brought us together, as journalists, to fight for the revolution and socialism,” Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017)

The editorial in *Punto Final*’s N° 1 manifested the fundamental belief that underpinned Cabieses and Díaz Barriento’s project.

We are a progressive and democratic publication. We believe the masses are the central protagonist of history and this magazine will serve them. We won’t be boxed in by artificial limits; we won’t shy away from polemics and we don’t fear to tell the truth (1965).

The creation of *Punto Final* coincided with the establishment – on October 12, 1965 - of the Chilean left wing guerrilla Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (The Revolutionary Left Movement, MIR in Spanish). Born in the University of Concepción, in the southern city of Concepción, MIR was founded by a group of students (Palieraki, 2014). One of those students was Miguel Enríquez who became one of its most influential leaders.

Cabieses was a close friend of Enríquez and published the first interview he gave as General Secretary of MIR. It was published in *Punto Final* N° 53, on April 23, 1968. At the time the interview was published, Cabieses was already a part of the movement.

According to Luis Vitale, a Chilean-Argentinean historian – Cabieses joined MIR during its Second National Congress held on August 1966 (1999:13). Vitale, who was also a founder of the movement, writes that Cabieses “put at the disposal of the MIR the pages of *Punto Final*” (1999:13).

Vitale’s account is contentious as Cabieses always rebuffed the perception that *Punto Final* was a media apparatus of MIR. “What happened was that the editorial and informative line became increasingly coincident with

the policies of the MIR and other sectors of the radicalized left in Chile and Latin America,” said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

Coinciding with the MIR’s Second National Congress – and the incorporation of Cabieses to the movement - *Punto Final* experienced a major new development. “It was the involvement of Jaime Barrios with the magazine,” said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

Barrio was a Chilean economist who - during the first years of the Cuban Revolution - worked with Che Guevara in the island’s Central Bank. He was a member of the Chilean Communist Party who travelled to Cuba – like many other left- wing professionals – to help with the revolutionary process.

Cabieses told the story that in “one of his trips to Chile Barrios joined us for dinner and during the dinner he convinced us that Chile was ripe for a left-wing publication inspired by the Cuban Revolution” (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). Cabieses doesn’t hesitate to describe Barrios as the “real father” of *Punto Final*.

At the same dinner was Alejandro Pérez, a lawyer. He supported Barrio’s idea of having a “proper” revolutionary magazine and offered to manage the financial side of the publication. “Alejandro [Pérez] and Jaime Barrios were part of the Socialist Party’s financial apparatus and they had connections with people with money; in those days the Socialists Party had some businesses here and there”, said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

From that moment on *Punto Final* was no longer a sporadic A4 publication. From issue N°10 it was published fortnightly and became as Fernández suggests a “center for dissemination of political ideas and a community of intellectuals at the service of the revolution” (2011: 70).

The editorial of N°10 clearly set the editorial agenda of *Punto Final*:

In order to restart our contact with our readers, we would like to point out some things. Firstly of course we must declare our political position.

All press organs have a position, even those who hide behind apparent objectivity. We do not want to deceive anyone. We are on the left, that is, between the political and social forces that fight for socialism (1966:1).

This “apparent objectivity” never has been part of the journalistic ethos of Manuel Cabieses. He had never pledged to the idea that journalism has to be objective detached from the people. “Journalism is an instrument of struggle”, he said (M. Cabieses, interview, January 28, 2018). And this ethos has transpired in each of the pages of this magazine.

From N°10 Punto Final moved away from the one-story per issue format and began diversifying its news agenda. It began publishing stories of arts and culture, film reviews, and its international coverage was reinforced. It also introduced a sports section – in effect a football page written by Isidro Corbinos, a Spanish journalist who also taught journalism at the state University de Chile.

The editorial meetings of *Punto Final* were held once a week. Cabieses remembers the meetings were held in “our own houses, where we ate, drank and talked about the main domestic and international issues we wanted to cover” (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). Besides they met to figure out how to resolve the many problems the magazine faced, including access to printing paper and commercial distribution. At that time both areas were fully controlled by El Mercurio S.A (Public Limited Company).

El Mercurio S.A. is the owner of *El Mercurio* newspaper, a conservative daily that played a central role in the military coup against the socialist government of Salvador Allende (Lagos et al, 2009). *El Mercurio* – that described *Punto Final* as a “Fidel Castro publication” – was constantly trying to boycott the distribution of the magazine. One of the solutions the publishers found was to sell the magazine in universities (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

In 1966, despite all its hurdles, *Punto Final* managed to establish its first office. It was located in 1010 Union Central Street, a Santiago’s down town street that years later changed its name to the current one – Bombero Ossa Alley. The office was on the eighth floor of the building and was provided at no cost by a friend of Cabieses and Díaz Barriento. “We occupied office

810, it was free but it had a minor problem - on the same floor there were several brothels,” remembers Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). A year later the magazine moved to the first and second floor of the same building.

It was during this time that the first editorial board of *Punto Final* was established. Journalists Augusto Olivares, Carlos Jorquera and Alejandro Pérez joined Cabieses and Díaz Barrientos as members. The board was soon enlarged. Hernán Lavín Cerda; a progressive Christian activist, Jaime Faivovich – who became the lawyer of the magazine – and Hernán Uribe were appointed.

In an interview, Hernán told Patricia Bravo that the magazine defined itself as a “progressive and democratic” medium (Bravo, 2005). He also told her: When *Punto Final* was established not all left wing parties agreed with us. We didn’t follow any party line. We were regarded as bad apples and criticized frequently. Later on, people accused the magazine as being the voice of MIR (Bravo, 2005).

The magazine opened its pages – said Cabieses – to all the revolutionary movements that began emerging in Latin America during the 1960s (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). It gave a platform to the likes of Raúl Sendic, founding leader of the Tupamaros, the Uruguayan guerrilla movement and to Carlos Mariguella, a Brazilian guerrilla fighter and author of the book *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*.

The magazine also published the essays of Régis Debray, the French philosopher, journalist and academic who fought alongside Che Guevara in the Bolivian revolutionary campaign of 1967. The magazine covered exhaustively Che Guevara’s attempt to launch a continental revolution from Bolivia in 1966- 1967.

The campaign of Che Guevara became a key part of the magazine’s first and perhaps major journalistic scoop. In 1968, it exclusively published *The Bolivian Diary* of Che Guevara. Behind the exclusive, there was a cloak and dagger story that had as its key protagonist Díaz Barriento, the co-founder of *Punto Final*.

The Bolivian Diary was a highly sought after historical document. It had reached the hands of Victor Zannier, a Bolivian Communist lawyer who had a closer friendship with Antonio Arguedas who was – at the time of the arrest and murder of Che Guevara – the Minister of Interior of Bolivia. Cabieses knew Zannier.

Zannier travelled to Chile with the diary in the form of a 35 mm negative film hidden inside a folk music long-play vinyl. It was handed over to Cabieses with the instructions to hand it over to the Cuban authorities. It became known as “Operación Tía Victoria” (Operation Aunt Victoria).

“The job to take the document to La Habana was given to Mario [Díaz] who travelled with the valuable document inside of a doll my wife Flora made,” Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). In appreciation, the Cuban government gave *Punto Final* the Latin America exclusive to publish *The Bolivian Diary*. With an introduction by Fidel Castro – it was published in July 1968 in N°59 of *Punto Final*. In those years, the magazine used to sell – fortnightly -16,000 copies. With the publication of *The Bolivian Diary*, *Punto Final* N° 59 was one of the best-sold issues in the magazine’s history. “We sold 65,000 copies,” said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

Punto Final, Frei and Allende

The magazine materialized in the Chilean media landscape during the first year of the government of the Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei Montalva, 1964-1970. “Under Frei, we had some difficult times”, said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). In March 23, 1969 *Punto Final* published in its N°77 the headline: “Mr Frei, you are responsible”.

The magazine laid blame on President Frei of the March 9, 1969 death of ten people – including a nine-month-old boy – in what it became known as the “massacre of Puerto Montt”. Edmundo Pérez Zujovic, who was then the Minister of the Interior of Frei, had ordered the police to expel a group of homeless people who had illegally occupied a plot of land. In the editorial of *Punto Final* N° 77 Cabieses wrote:

The fascist side of the Christian Democrats has come to light again with the massacre of Puerto Montt. That terrible event, the third under the current administration, whose responsibility is boasted with impunity by businessmen and obscure lawyers, denounces on its own the brutal characteristics of the regime the country suffers under. The government led by President Eduardo Frei Montalva, without hesitation defends private property and protects the jurisdiction in Chile enjoyed by the bourgeoisie and its partner US imperialism' (1969).

In response to the cover and editorial, President Frei made use of the maligned 1937 State Interior Security Law to stop the circulation of the magazine. *Punto Final* was suspended for four weeks; the two issues of April 1969. Cabieses ended up in jail. "During my arrest, Salvador Allende came to see me", Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). Allende, who in 1970 became the first Marxist president elected in Chile, was then a Senator of the republic and a good friend of Cabieses.

During the month of April while the magazine was barred from publishing and Cabieses was in jail and a group of journalists edited a temporary publication called *Prensa Firme* (Unwavering Press). Despite the storm under Frei, *Punto Final* was by 1969 a consolidated publication and attracted contributions from a significant number of internationally renowned thinkers such as French Jean Paul Sartre; the German-American economic historian and sociologist André Gunder Frank and Cuban poet, journalist and writer Nicolás Guillén.

The beginning of the 1970s was marked by the election of Salvador Allende as president of Chile. A Marxist, Allende was committed to a democratic and liberal system. It was a system disparaged by many of Allende's own allies and friends such as Cabieses. During the months that followed the election of Allende, *Punto Final* was highly critical of Allende's electoral stance.

In issue N° 73 of January 28, 1969, the magazine published "Chile: either the polling vote or the gun" – an editorial calling the population to boycott the election of 1970 (Cabieses, 1969). In the same issue Díaz Barriento denounced Allende's electoral campaign as "a reformist" strategy instead of a revolutionary one. Explicitly, the magazine was calling for a Cuban

style armed struggle to achieve socialism. Looking back to the editorial, Cabieses admitted it was “an inflammatory pamphlet” (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

In the first year of Allendes government, the disparagement against the electoral position taken by Allende continued. Members of the editorial board, however, began questioning the position *Punto Final* has taken on Allende. Hernán Uribe, one of the founding members of the magazine editorial board, said that *Punto Final* in “its eagerness to condemn the capitalist, liberal and bourgeoisie society went over the top in its criticism over Allende. Some of the issues were very aggressive and perhaps was due to the influence of MIR” (Bravo 2005).

Uribe and two other members of the editorial board, Carlos Jorquera and Jaime Faivovich, became outspoken critics of the editorial position *Punto Final* had taken on the Allende’s government. The fear of a military coup and in the context of this internal criticism – by influential members of the magazine – *Punto Final* shifted its editorial position. It began a process of alignment with Allende’s government and in its pages called for unity between the “traditional left” and the “revolutionary left”.

Mario Díaz Barriento wrote:

The magazine took – as an ideological position – the decision to promote unity among the traditional left and the revolutionary left with the aim to rally and mobilize all forces in the decisive struggle ahead against imperialism and a possible coup d’état (1972: 11).

Dictatorship

And the *coup d’état* materialized. The right wing and US backed September 11, 1973 military coup against the democratically elected Socialist government of Salvador, Allende sank the country into one of its darkest historical chapters. For *Punto Final* it meant imprisonment, exile and death.

From the first moments following the bloody coup – lead by General Augusto Pinochet – the magazine was singled out and targeted. In her book “Interferencia Secreta” (Secret Interference, 1998) Chilean investigative journalist Patricia Verdugo published a transcript of a telephone order Pinochet – who was the Commander in Chief of the army - gave to his subordinates.

On behalf of the Commander in Chief, in addition to the measures that exist on radio and television, eh... they are not accepted, I repeat, any ... media of any kind. And the ones that come out in addition to being requisitioned, it will cause the destruction of their facilities. Over ... eh... precisely the staff who work there in *Punto Final*. Everyone has to be detained. Over (Verdugo, 1998: 179-180).

On the day of the coup, it was a Tuesday; Cabieses was at work at *Última Hora*. “The newspaper was in Tenderini Street, next to the Municipal Theatre. We were trying to prepare a special edition. At the newspaper printing site, all workers were already under arrest,” remembers Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

At noon, the aerial bombing of La Moneda – the government house where President Allende eventually died – began. Cabieses witnessed it from the terraces of the building where *Última Hora* had its offices. The bombing went on for 15 minutes. As soon as it ended, Cabieses and his colleague José Carrasco Tapia – who also worked at *Última Hora* and wrote for *Punto Final* – stepped outside of the building and headed to La Moneda. “We were journalists after all and we wanted to see what had happened”, he said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). It was a perilous act since Cabieses was already under an arrest order – the military Ordinance N°10.

After witnessing the destruction of La Moneda, Cabieses headed to the offices of *Punto Final*. “On my way - in one of the newsstands - I saw the cover of the September issue of the magazine”, he said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). The magazine had managed to hit the streets of Santiago on the morning of the coup. It was a black and white cover with the headline: “Soldiers, the homeland is working class”. It was *Punto Final* N° 192.

To *Punto Final*, the coup of 1973 not only meant its closure but it also meant death, imprisonment and exile. During the military dictatorship, 23 journalists were killed (Carmona, 2017). Several of them were journalists and collaborators of the magazine. One of them was Augusto Olivares – an old *Punto Final* columnist who had become adviser to Allende – who killed himself during the siege of La Moneda on September 11, 1973. Cabieses, who during the first two days of the coup remained hidden, was eventually caught and arrested on September 13, 1973. “I was recognized in the street”, Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). He was arrested the same day Jaime Barrios – the “real father of *Punto Final*” as Cabieses describes him - was executed. Máximo Antonio Gedda Ortiz – a columnist of the magazine and militant of MIR - was detained on July 1974. He was never seen again.

Augusto Carmona Acevedo, a journalist who covered for *Punto Final* in Bolivia the trial against Régis Debray, was assassinated on December 1977. He was 38 years old. He was a militant of MIR. José Carrasco Tapia, who accompanied Cabieses for witnessing what was left of La Moneda after the aerial attack on September 11, was killed on September 8, 1986. Carrasco was a member of the editorial board of *Punto Final* until its closure in 1973. Years earlier, in 1974, Carrasco’s partner Jane Vanini – who worked as secretary of *Punto Final* - was assassinated in the southern city of Concepción. Díaz Barriente, the co-founder of *Punto Final*, died in exile in Argentina in 1984. Jaime Faivovich also died in exile in Mexico.

After his arrest Cabieses spent two years in several military concentration camps including the infamous “Estadio Nacional” (National Stadium). Due to international pressures, the military dictatorship freed him. He was, however, forced to leave the country. In exile, Cabieses and his family lived in Cuba. He remained in La Habana until 1979 when he and his family clandestinely entered Chile and joined the resistance against Pinochet. “Between 1970 and 1989 my wife and I lived clandestinely. We disguised our identities. I pretended to be a schoolteacher”, Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). During these years, he edited *El Rebelde*, an underground publication that belonged to MIR.

Punto Final N°193

During the dictatorship, *Punto Final* reappeared in Mexico in May 1981. Díaz Barriento, who was exiled there – managed it. It was a short-lived project though. It ended in 1982. It was not until 1989 that *Punto Final* was published again in Chile. The military dictatorship was living its last moments. In a plebiscite on October 5, 1988, Pinochet’s bid to remain in power was rejected by Chileans (Constable and Valenzuela, 1989).

Cabieses was ambiguous with the re-publication of *Punto Final*. “I thought the magazine didn’t have a space in a system colonized by neoliberalism”, Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). The person who convinced him that *Punto Final* had a role to play in the process of democratization was Rene Valenzuela.

One of the founders of MIR Valenzuela and Cabieses met in Buenos Aires. Valenzuela was in exile there. “He convinced me to start the magazine again”, he said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). But Cabieses didn’t have a cent. “One day I had in my hands, dropped from heaven, an invitation to attend the February 2, 1989, presidential oath of Venezuela’s Carlos Andrés Pérez”, said Cabieses who lived and worked in Venezuela for several years (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

While in Caracas, Venezuela’s capital, Cabieses bumped into Gabriel García Márquez, the Colombian writer and Nobel Prize winner. He was too, attending the presidential ceremony. “We were staying in the same hotel and when I saw him I told him about my intention to re-start publishing *Punto Final*”, Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). Gabriel García Marquez was - as Cabieses said - “all ears”.

Cabieses told him he needed money. The Colombian writer – who knew the magazine - was then living in Mexico. He also knew well the problems of independent journalism in Latin America. In 1960, he published in Colombia the magazine *Acción Liberal* (Liberal Action) that only lasted three issues. “He offered to lead the funding campaign; he even gave me the money from his own pocket”, said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

In two months, the funding campaign was over. “One day García Márquez rang me, he wanted me to go to Mexico to collect the money”, said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). As soon as he arrived in Mexico City, Cabieses headed to García Márquez’s home in 144 Pedregal Street, San Angel neighborhood. Hernán Uribe, old member of the magazine’s editorial board, and his wife, María Teresa Rambaldi accompanied him. They were in exile in Mexico (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

“There in the kitchen of García Márquez”–Cabieses remembers– “drinking coffee and accompanied by his wife Mercedes, he handed me, in cash, the money he had collected” (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). “It was enough to maintain the magazine for a year”, he said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

In 1990, when García Márquez went to Chile to attend the inauguration of Patricio Aylwin as the first president of the transition to democracy, Cabieses went to see him at his hotel. “I brought him a few copies of Punto Final; I wanted to thank him for his support”, Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

On his return to Santiago from Mexico – carrying the cash García Marquez had collected - Cabieses had thorny obstacles to sort out. The first one was with the banks. He needed a bank account. “I have all this quantity of money but no bank wanted to open us an account”, Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

Cabieses personal financial antecedents didn’t exist. “I didn’t even have a debt”, he said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

He also needed a legal entity able to represent the magazine in Chile’s never-ending legal paperwork system such as the registration of the magazine with the National Library, with the Municipality of Santiago and the signing of a contract with a printing site. “The only person who helped us with all of this was Lenin Guardia, whom despite his obscure history, I recognized his gesture to help us”, said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). Lenin Guardia – a controversial figure in Chile’s

Socialist Party – agreed to be his business partner allowing him to bring *Punto Final* back to the streets (Cabieses, 2015).

And the final hurdle was indeed the military dictatorship that was still in power. Ambrosio Rodríguez –who was Pinochet’s attorney general - sought to obstruct the re-launch of the magazine. He described *Punto Final* as a terrorist and communist organization. “Fortunately the tribunals, by that time, were not willing to bend to pressure from Pinochet and rejected the legal recourse”, Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

Ultimately, *Punto Final* re-appeared in the streets of Santiago on August 1989. It was N° 193, the issue that waited 16 years for its publication. “We re-started with a bunch of young writers, most of them young journalism students and the newsroom was then the lounge room of my home”, said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017)

In the editorial of N° 193 – “El día que nos mandaron a la hoguera” (The day they sent us to the bonfire) – Cabieses wrote:

We ask our readers for forgiveness for our overdue return. Reasons beyond our control prevented us from publishing on Tuesday, September 25, 1973, sixteen years ago, as was our obligation. All Chileans shared the problems that impacted *Punto Final*; at least democratic and progressive Chileans who, as we have stubbornly demonstrated are the majority. We consider ourselves obliged, however, to give this explanation because a magazine does not stop appearing for 16 years just like that. Less when it comes to a publication clearly identified with the most advanced interests and the most resolute ideas of our people. It is too many years of absence (1989).

In the same editorial, he remembered those who once were a part of *Punto Final*:

We returned only some of who we were. We carry the pain of their absences. We suffer for those who are not here. They are part of the armies of unforgettable and beloved silhouettes that march in the ranks of the people, encouraging those who are tired, strengthening those who doubt, setting aside those who desert, calming those who despair (1989).

Just a few months after Punto Final was launched, a general election was held in Chile, on December 14, 1989. The election brought the dictatorship to an end and placed in power the center-left Coalition of Parties for Democracy lead by Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin.

Despite this defeat, Pinochet stayed in power as Commander-in-Chief of the army and later as senator-for-life. From that position, the former dictator made one final attempt to close down *Punto Final*. Under Pinochet's representation - in 1991 - President Aylwin applied against the magazine – and Manuel Cabieses – the State Security Law.

This happened after the government and the military justice filed a case against him for the front cover of N° 247 of *Punto Final* of September 1991. The cover depicts Pinochet wiping his nose with the Chilean flag and a headline describing him as “scornful and sadistic” (Drago, 1991).

Enrique Krauss, then Interior Minister of Patricio Aylwin, argued that *Punto Final's* headline and the illustration of Pinochet were insulting and defamatory. “It is clear that the crime of public outrage of the national flag has been committed and at the same time the Commander-in-Chief of the Army has been insulted”, stated Krauss (Délano, 1991).

By order of the military justice, the police – On October 31, 1991 – detained Cabieses in his home. “I keep the date of my arrest in my memory because it was my last detention; well, I think it was the last one, hopefully”, he said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). Fortunately, Cabieses had a skilled defense lawyer: José Galiano, a Christian Democrat from the left who secured his early release. The legal proceedings against him and against *Punto Final* concluded without major consequences.

In this new scenario – post dictatorship - Cabieses visualized *Punto Final* not only as a journalistic platform. He wanted to see it engaged in the new paradigms Chile was facing in democracy. “Punto Final has never been engaged in minor projects, I wanted the magazine to also be an effective platform of political action”, Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

One of the first tasks the magazine undertook in its pages was to bring the left together. The left – and the progressive movement - was highly fragmented and unable to come up with a vision for the future of the country. In the April of 1993, *Punto Final*, under the leadership of the longtime collaborator of the magazine priest and theologian Leo Wetli, held a major conference in Santiago that brought together Christians and Marxists.

And in 1995, the magazine began advocating for a change to the 1980 Constitution that Pinochet had instituted during his regime. *Punto Final* saw it as a serious impediment for the consolidation of a truly effective democracy. In this context, the magazine launched a “Forum for Democracy” – a politically ecumenical platform with the objective, first to set up a Constituent Assembly, and second to write a new constitution.

On the international front of the magazine, Cabieses never forgets the influence the Cuban Revolution had on the gestation of *Punto Final*. During the severe economic crisis that the island experienced in the mid-1990s, the magazine launched a campaign called “One Liter of Oil for Cuba”. In his 2015 book – mentioned earlier - Cabieses wrote: “the goal was to raise 840 million pesos. It was not reached, but a considerable sum was given to the embassy of Cuba in Santiago” (2015: 141).

In addition, the magazine began taking a critical approach on the so-called “real socialism.” *Punto Final* – as Cabieses said – “became highly critical of the former Soviet Union and communist parties around the world” (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). And at the same time, the magazine began elaborating an editorial line closely aligned to the emerging Latin American, twenty first century progressive movements and leaders such as Evo Morales and the late Hugo Chavez.

It was precisely with Hugo Chavez, the former Venezuelan leader who died in 2013, that Cabieses established not only a political alignment but also a close friendship. The two met in Santiago, in 1992, when Chavez arrived in the Chilean capital after his failed attempt to overthrow the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez in Venezuela.

Despite his left leaning political position, the Chilean left didn't respond favorably to Chavez's presence in the country. Cabieses, however, met him. He interviewed him and published a long piece in *Punto Final*. Among those events that marked the magazine - and me personally - Cabieses said, "was the friendship and political affiliation with Chavez" (Cabieses, 2015:145).

The friendship between the two men strengthened throughout the years and when the former Venezuelan leader reached power in 1999, he enabled a paid advertisement in *Punto Final* of Petr leos de Venezuela, the country's state-owned oil and gas company. "I didn't ask for this courtesy, it was an act of friendship", said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). The advertisement enabled by Chavez was a major source of funding for the magazine and during the first stages of its re-publication it allowed it to survive. It was indeed, one of the few pro-democracy independent publications that survived in the post-dictatorship democracy.

The Chilean transition to democracy - underpinned by a series of undemocratic pacts and agreements with the former dictator and by the presence of an ultra-neoliberal market economy - had a disastrous impact on the majority of the pro-democracy newspapers and magazines that appeared during the Pinochet dictatorship (Castillo, 2009).

The new democratic authorities left the Chilean media system to the so-called regulatory mechanisms of the market (Sunkel and Geoffroy, 2001: 21). This brought about not only the demise of the gutsy pro-democracy media that had emerged during the dictatorship but bizarrely it strengthened the commercial media loyal to Pinochet.

The fundamental problem of magazines such as *Punto Final* has - as Cabieses said - is "financial" and one of the key sources of money for the independent media comes from state advertising. "In Chile there is not one single news organization that doesn't depend on advertising", he said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). State advertising is one of the few sources that *Punto Final* could attract and was keen to publish. "Due to our editorial line, we don't approach and we don't want private businesses advertising", Cabieses said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

During the first years of the transition to democracy, Cabieses, like many other editors of the left-wing publications, asked the authorities to consider them when distributing state advertising money. Cabieses said that the “state manages approximately US\$ 300 million in advertising annually and we have proved that this only goes to a small number of news organizations”, (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

Newspapers *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera* – the latter is the second most read newspaper in Chile after *El Mercurio* - enjoy the largest share of the Chilean state advertising budget. These newspapers were loyal supporters of the dictatorship (Castillo, 2009)

For years, Manuel Cabieses has been making representations – unsuccessfully - to the Chilean state to publish state advertising in the magazine. “In September 2006, we denounced this situation to the National Economic Prosecutor”, said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). The State Prosecutor launched an investigation but it didn’t find merits to penalize the way the state distributes its publicity budget. Deciding to fight the cause, Cabieses appealed to the Tribunal de la Defensa de la Libre Competencia (Tribunal of the Defense of the Free Competition). He put forward the testimonies of journalists, politicians and advertisers. His appeal failed.

“Punto Final makes a feat of survival”, said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, interview, January 28, 2018). Despite all the financial problems, the magazine is still published fortnightly. Direct sales at street kiosks and subscriptions are the magazine’s main source of income. Sometimes the magazine organizes fund raising events and receives help from the “Punto Final Group of Friends”. This is mainly a group of Chileans whom live overseas and – as Cabieses said – “share the ideals of the magazine” (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). And while he is thankful for this help, he is also cautious. “Solidarity is a capricious and sporadic resource. This makes the survival of the magazine very vulnerable and precarious”, he said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

At the moment of writing *Punto Final* costs 800 Chilean pesos (about US\$1,32) and fortnightly sells approximately 8,000 copies. This includes around 500 subscriptions in Chile and abroad. This is not a great figure, says Cabieses. He is concerned that the magazine today has far fewer readers. “During the 70s, we used to sell more than 16,000 copies fortnightly”, he said (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). One of the things that make Cabieses hopeful is that the current readers of the magazine are young; most of them are between from 15 to 29 years of age (Extremera, 2007).

Punto Final has a small paid permanent staff that includes a director, manager, designer, proofreader, secretary and assistant. It also has two writers who collaborate on a regular basis and eight other local and international sporadic collaborators. In general, collaborators are paid a small sum. The lack of funding has seriously eroded the magazine’s capacity to engage in high impact and exclusive stories.

The magazine doesn’t do, for example, investigative journalism and on-the ground reporting is rare (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017). To fix these shortcomings the magazine focuses on journalism of analysis and interpretation. “We are not either an academic or a theoretical publication, *Punto Final* is a magazine that examines current events and delves into the interpretation, and contextualization of current events”, said Cabieses (M. Cabieses, Interview, September 28, 2017).

Despite the old and new problems the magazine are experiencing, *Punto Final* has remained – since its foundation in 1965 - faithful to its original ideals. As he told the Chilean journalist and former editor of the now defunct *Análisis* magazine: “We haven’t changed an inch from the original aims of the magazine where we defined it as a guardian of democratic values. Our original struggle and values remain in place and have been adapted to the new context” (Cárdenas, 2015).

In this new context - where most of the population is not visible in the commercial and hegemonic news media – “*Punto Final* remains engaged in the struggle to make the problems, demands and aspirations of *the* people visible”, he said (M. Cabieses, interview, January 28, 2018).

References

1. Bravo, Patricia. 2005. "Punto Final cumple 39 años", *Revista Punto Final*. Retrieved <http://www.rebellion.org/noticia.php?id=7216>
2. Cabieses, Manuel and Mario Díaz Barriento. 1965. Editorial N°1, *Revista Punto Final*
3. Cabieses, Manuel.1969. "Señor Frei: usted es responsable," *Revista Punto Final*,
4. No. 77, March 25
5. Cabieses, Manuel.1969. 'Chile: el voto o el fusil,' *Revista Punto Final* N° 73 Tuesday January 28, 1969 also available at <http://www.blest.eu/inf/PF73d.html>
6. Cabieses, Manuel.1989. 'El día que nos mandaron a la hoguera,' *Punto Final*, August
7. 15. Retrieved <http://www.puntofinal.cl/790/hoguera790.php>
8. Cabieses, Manuel. 2014. Gabriel García Márquez, el periodista militante, available at <http://www.fronteralatinade.com/2014/05/gabriel-garcia-marquez-el-periodista-militante-audio.html>
9. Cabieses, Manuel. 2015. *Autobiografía de un rebelde*, Santiago: Ocean Sur Editorial,
10. Cabieses, Manuel. 2017, September 30. Personal Interview
11. Cabieses, Manuel. 2018, January 28. Personal Interview.
12. Cárdenas, Juan Pablo. 2015. "Comentario Político de Juan Pablo Cárdenas: Friday 13 November 2015, Radio Universidad de Chile. Retrieved <http://radio.uchile.cl/programas/comentario-politico/juan-pablo-cardenas-conversa-con-el-director-de-la-revista-punto-final-manuel-cabieses-a-proposito-de-su-autobiografia-recien-editada/>

13. Carmona, Ernesto. 1997. *Morir es la noticia*, Santiago: E. Carmona
14. Castillo, Antonio. 2009. "The lost decade: journalism in the Chilean transition to democracy, 1990-2000," PhD, Western Sydney University
15. Constable, Pamela and Arturo Valenzuela. 1989. "Chile's Return to Democracy, Foreign Affairs", Issue 90. Retrieved <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/chile/1989-12-01/chiles-return-democracy>
16. Délano, Manuel. 1991. "El Gobierno chileno se querella contra una revista que llamó *sádico* a Pinochet", *El País*, September 23. Retrieved https://elpais.com/diario/1991/09/23/internacional/685576819_850215.html
17. Díaz Barriento, Mario. 1972. "Los seis años de Punto Final", *Revista Punto Final*, No. 165, pp. 10-11
18. Drago, Mirta. 1991. "Periodista chileno detenido", *El País*, November 1. Retrieved https://elpais.com/diario/1991/11/01/internacional/688950005_850215.html
19. Editorial. 1966. *Revista Punto Final*, p. 2
20. Extremera, Deny. 2007. "La mayor parte de los lectores de 'Punto Final' hoy son jóvenes de 15 a 29 años", *Rebelión*. Retrieved <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=45426>
21. Fernández, Manuel. 2011. "Los intelectuales de izquierda y la construcción de un imaginario revolucionario para Chile y América Latina, La Revista Punto Final entre 1965 y 1973," *Tiempo Histórico*, No. 2, pp. 65-84
22. Faivovich, Jaime. 1969. 'El proceso a Punto Final,' *Revista Punto Final*, May Tuesday 6, 1969, p. 2-4.

23. Lagos, Claudia, Claudia Salinas and Hans Stange. 2009. “El diario de Agustín. El involucramiento de El Mercurio durante la dictadura militar chilena (1973-1990): Un estudio de casos” in Andrés Cañizales (Ed.) *Tiempos de Cambios, Política y Comunicación en America Latina*, Caracas: Universidad Andrés Bello
24. Palieraki, Eugenia. 2014. *La revolución ya viene, El MIR Chileno en los años sesenta* LOM Ediciones: Santiago
25. Sarlo, Beatriz. 1992. “Intelectuales y revistas : razones de una práctica”. In: *América : Cahiers du CRICCAL*, N°9-10, pp. 9-16
26. Sunkel, Guillermo and Esteban Geoffroy. 2001. “Concentración Económica e Ideológica en los Medios de Comunicación” *Rocinante*, No. 28, pp. 21-24.
27. Verdugo, Patricia.1998. *Inteferencia Secreta*, Santiago: Editorial Sudamericana:
28. Vitale, Luis.1999.*Contribución a la Historia del MIR*. Santiago: Instituto de Investigacione de Movimientos Sociales Pedro Vuskovic.