

A group of television journalists prepare the taping of their yearly program. Their special guest is Cecilia, who has just arrived from Europe. All are waiting for a friend and colleague, Ana Maria. While they wait, Fernando and Martin are called by the station manager.

Cecilia and Ignacio remember the time they spent in Argentina in 1958 when Arturo Frondizi won the elections. They talk about how their lives have changed.

Fernando and Martin wait nervously to be received by the station manager. They talk about their student days. Downstairs, Cecilia and Ignacio continue to reminisce. Cecilia, a young journalist, has great illusions about Frondizi's election. Ignacio, more sceptical, considers the democratic triumph a passing phase. They argue; Ignacio tries to seduce her.

Upstairs Martin and Fernando, still waiting to see the station manager and afraid of this untimely call, speak about Ana Maria's unexpected absence from the taping.

Downstairs, Ignacio and Cecilia continue reliving their past in Buenos Aires. Cecilia resists Ignacio's advances; he makes fun of her optimism regarding the apparent democratization of Argentina's political life. She finally gives in to his advances. The action returns to the present. Both laugh about those experiences of their youth. Martin returns after seeing the manager. Fernando is still upstairs. Ignacio insists that Martin tell them why they were called by the station manager. Finally, Martin shows them a paper in which he and Fernando are accused of violating the laws of the station by wearing their hair long, swearing and having a messy personal appearance. The document, signed by the Internal Health Committee, states that this poor behavior is characteristic of "times that fortunately have passed forever."

Cecilia, who has been in Europe for years, laughs at the internal situation in Chile, which she does not completely comprehend. Ignacio tries to minimize the problem by saying that the most important thing is to tape the program. He reads from a document and accuses many people employed by the station of being mediocre.

Veronica arrives and asks Ignacio for help. Her husband, Jorge, had spoken on the phone with Ana Maria and begun drinking when she told him why she was not able to come for the taping. Veronica is afraid Jorge will start making untactful remarks. Ignacio decides to go and make sure Jorge does not get himself in trouble, and Veronica goes with him.

While Cecilia and Martin speak about his personal life, Jorge arrives at the station manager's office and demands an appointment. While waiting he takes out a paper and tries to get Fernando to sign it. The paper is a petition defending Ana Maria, who has been fired from the station. Fernando, afraid, refuses to sign the petition, which, among other things, mentions human rights. Jorge accuses him of becoming complacent. The management asks him to be silent, and Jorge explodes, screaming that no one will shut him up. Finally Fernando persuades Jorge to sit down. Downstairs, Cecilia and Martin talk alone as they drink. He tries to caress her but she rejects him. Martin is tense after the meeting with the station manager. Cecilia takes him away for a cup of coffee. Upstairs, Jorge continues trying to convince Fernando to sign the petition in support of Ana Maria Montoya. He accuses Fernando of being like Ignacio, a coward. Ignacio and Veronica enter.

Ignacio reads the petition and Veronica signs it. Ignacio makes Fernando sign it too, and says that he will personally take care of this matter and keeps the petition. Jorge and Ignacio embrace as the station manager bids them enter, and both begin reciting a poem, -- a personal code between them and their aspirations for a better, brighter and freer world.

ACT II

The team arrives to continue the taping. Ignacio gives the order to start. Fernando arrives from the manager's office. They ask him how it went. Fernando replies that he'll tell them later what happened.

The taping begins with a film report. When the film portion ends, Ignacio distributes the program script which deals with the Chilean exodus of the last two years and the problems of adaptation abroad. They show Fernando's film report. Ignacio again distributes the script which corresponds to the film which now deals with the question, "Is Chile a country of friends?" After the films, each correspondent begins to develop his respective theme. Fernando talks about the topic "Is Chile a country of friends?" and ends his report by pointing out the empty seat of Ana Maria, in order to show the problem of a journalist who has not been allowed to do her job. Ignacio tries to stop him but Fernando continues. He explains before the television cameras that they have drafted and signed a collective petition that was handed to the management in defense of Ana Maria. Ignacio gives the order to cut.

When Fernando tells them that during his interview with the general manager, this man showed his support for the team's petition on behalf of their colleague, Ignacio shows them Jorge's petition which he had not submitted. Jorge insists that Ignacio hand in the letter and refuses to accept Ignacio's reasons that he only wanted to insure the survival of the team. Finally, Jorge takes the paper and goes upstairs to hand it in. Martin, the only one who has not signed it, runs after Jorge. Downstairs, Veronica tells Ignacio that she is worried about Jorge's violent attitude. She is afraid it will cause him trouble, especially after he hands in the petition. Cecilia does not completely understand the situation. Her life in Europe has made her a stranger here. Ignacio explains their professional situation and speaks of the talents of the team members who are destined to be destroyed by provocations from the station's authorities.

Upstairs, in the manager's office, Martin reads the letter he had not signed. It seems too conciliatory for him and he refuses to sign it. Downstairs in the studio, Fernando, Cecilia and Ignacio discuss the letter. Fernando finds it too aggressive and wants Cecilia to write a less forceful one.

Upstairs Veronica and Jorge fight about his decision to submit the letter. She calls him irresponsible and he threatens her.

Downstairs, in a recording studio, Ignacio and Cecilia relive a moment from their past. He returns from an assignment in Concepcion and she becomes upset that he didn't call her when he arrived.

Upstairs, in the present, Fernando asks Jorge for the letter. He begins to correct it. Jorge, furious, takes it away from him. Martin arrives and announces that he is resigning.

Downstairs, Ignacio makes Cecilia listen to the speech made by the dean of the University of Concepcion before the student body. Cecilia interrupts to tell him that she is going to London to work for the B.B.C. Her contract

begins on January 15, 1961. Ignacio accuses her of trying to escape. He has just succeeded in creating the Press Department of the first university TV station in Chile. He counted on her to help develop the project. But Cecilia, feeling that Chile is limited in opportunities in comparison to Europe, has decided to leave the country. Ignacio foresees a fortunate future for Chile and tries to convince her to stay.

Suddenly the scene turns to the present. We are no longer in 1961. Today Ignacio tells Cecilia he is exhausted by the mediocrity surrounding him. While they speak, a magazine, calling Cecilia for an interview, ask her stupid and frivolous questions. Veronica and Jorge arrive. Jorge accuses Ignacio of having given up. They argue. Ignacio, exhausted, says that he gives the team the freedom to abandon the station and orders the taping suspended. Cecilia tries to prevent him, but Ignacio goes to the managers office to resign. Cecilia reads a letter she received from Ignacio when she was in Madrid a few months earlier. In the letter, Ignacio explains why he decided to stay in Chile. He speaks of the need to preserve knowledge for the future in spite of the present and praises the team he is working with on the program. The letter affects them greatly.

At that moment, Ana Maria Montoya arrives. She is ready to start working, in spite of all the obstacles she has endured from the stations directors. Veronica goes to find Ignacio and tells him of Ana Maria's arrival. Ignacio goes downstairs without having seen the manager. When he again announces the suspension of the taping, Jorge detains him and tells him that he must continue with the work. Ignacio gives the order to continue, but before they begin to record, Cecilia interrupts and says in front of the camera that she would like to pay homage to the group on this anniversary day of the program. Cecilia has understood the difficulties the people who opted to stay have undergone. She reads for the television audience a part of the letter written her by Ignacio in which he speaks precisely of these difficulties. But at the same time he tells her of his pride in having stayed in Chile. "I was always here".