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“LET THERE BE LIGHT!” THE UNPRECEDENTED PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF ENEL UNDER EXHIBITION IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

- *The exhibition will be open to the public until July 28th.*

Santiago, May 23rd, 2019. They are a total of 19,389 photographs, in different formats that were delivered by Enel Chile, on loan, to the National Library. It is the Institutional Historical Photographic Archive of Enel Distribución that will be exhibited from May 23 to July 28 in the Marta Cruz-Coke hall of the National Library free of charge.

The exhibition began to take shape in 2018 after the signing of an agreement between Enel Chile and the Servicio Nacional del Patrimonio Cultural. The images render account of the arrival of electric power to Santiago and of how the city and its inhabitants underwent an important change. All of the images were delivered in different formats from negatives on glass plates, through plastic supports, to blueprint copies, which kept their original format (bluish tone photos on paper).

Carlos Maillet, national director for Patrimonio assures that the “the Enel Archive must be one of the most complete visual records existing in Chile, its photographic quality and conservation conditions render account, in an exceptional manner, about the beginnings of the development that we experienced starting the past century. Undoubtedly, it’s a heritage that must be broadcasted and put on display for the knowledge of all Chileans”.

Within the collection delivered and that shall be displayed starting today, 50 photographic albums stand out, which are a complete and interesting record of the construction of the first power plants, the implementation of electric power services and the startup of the tramways, among other things. One year after this agreement, the Photographic Archive of the National Library has digitized and cataloged these albums, which are now available to be consulted at the National Digital Library.

This Institutional Historical archive of Enel, is the most complete and valuable record existing currently about the capital city during the 20th Century. Its images portray the city’s modernizing process.

Paolo Pallotti, general manager for Enel Chile points out the historical importance of this material under exhibition in the National Library. “These photographs render account of a historical milestone for Santiago, they are an invaluable photographic record portraying the advance of light over the city. With the arrival of electricity to the capital city and later to the regions, the way of life of the Chileans up to this moment changed. Electricity drove the country’s development. As of today, Enel continues driving electro mobility, fostering new uses for energy”.

These close to 12 thousand photographs are an invitation to go visit the National Library to discover a different Santiago, from other times, which gazed with surprise and wonder how light made its first



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appearance and transformed forever the streets and showcases of the city. It is the first delivery on the part of Enel Chile to the National Library and tells the story starting from 1883.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On March, 1883, electric power arrived to Santiago. Private businessmen took charge of leading the installation of two streetlights in the middle of the Plaza de Armas. In 1897, the Municipality of Santiago reached an agreement with the English company, Parrish Bros, which was granted the concession for the construction of electric power traction railway lines, laying of cables and street light installation. Two years later, Parrish Bros transferred to the Chilean Electric Tramway and Light Company, a company backed by German capital, headquartered in London, the contract in its power with the municipality. This latter company immediately started up the Mapocho Thermal Power Plant (1900), located in the corner of Mapocho and Almirante Barroso streets, whose purpose was to deliver electric power for downtown Santiago.

Chilean Electric Tramway and Light Company later formed a partnership with the Compañía Alemana Transatlántica de Electricidad, which promptly began the construction, in the Cajón del Maipo, of the Florida Hydroelectric Power Plant that began operating in 1910.

In 1919 the Compañía Nacional de Fuerza Eléctrica was formed. The following year, said company began the construction of the Maitenes Hydroelectric Power Plant located in the banks of the Colorado River, a tributary of the Maipo River.

In 1897, Chivilingo opened, the first Hydroelectric Power Plant of the country, located in Lota. In Punta Arenas, the Compañía de Luz Eléctrica de Punta Arenas began operations in 1898. In 1905 the Compañía General de Electricidad Industrial (CGEI) was formed, involved in providing electric power to Ñuñoa and San Bernardo.

In 1921, the Compañía Nacional de Fuerza Eléctrica and the assets of the Chilean Electric Tramway and Light Company merged, giving birth to the Compañía Chilena de Electricidad Limitada, a private company involved in electric power generation and distribution, to be known later as Chilectra, currently Enel Distribución. Along with the formation of this company began one of the periods of greatest expansion and growth of the electric power industry in Chile.

The 1920s decade was a key period in the electric power industry in Chile. In February 1925, the State, concerned by the fast expansion of the system, issued the first General Law on Electric Power Services. Said law created the guidelines for the electric power installation and its service.

In 1929, the property of the Compañía Chilena de Electricidad was transferred to the hands of the United States South American and Foreign Power Co. Parallel to this the separation of the electric traction business was ruled and the tram lines passed to the State.

Since the end of the 19th century the panorama was changing and electric power began to assume a relevant role in the capital. Electric lighting began to spread throughout the streets and even was introduced into some homes, meanwhile the transportation system also underwent changes. It used



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to be that people moved thanks to animal drawn carts, which were known as blood trams. However, with the arrival of electric power, horse and mule drawn carts were discarded.

In this way, Santiago turned into a city in which electric power assumed a leading role. This was made evident, not only due to the sight of lit streetlights or seeing the trams moving through the streets. During the 1920s decade, and in the hands of the recently created Compañía Chilena de Electricidad, an important expansion in the electric power sector took place. The elaboration and availability of reinforced concrete posts and the installation of underground electric power networks downtown, were among other transformations undergone in those years.