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NEWS

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President Ricardo Lagos and Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, at La Moncloa Palace in Madrid.

A possible utopia

“Bringing Chile to the threshold of full development by its Bicentennial” is a “possible utopia,” declared President Ricardo Lagos in his Message to Congress on May 21, his fifth address on the state of the nation since taking office in 2000.

The kind of development Chile is pursuing is “that of a society enjoying a minimum level of civilization, below which no Chilean man or woman falls,” he stated, emphasizing that the country is on the right course to advance toward this goal. The President enumerated some of the achievements seen during 2003: the Health Reform, the Chile Solidarity program, the Civil Marriage Law, human rights laws, a new national cultural institution, and a number of free trade agreements.

President Lagos stressed that in spite of the difficult times faced during recent years, Chile never halted its growth, nor did it reduce its social spending. He pointed out that during challenging times, the government moved forward with enormous investments in education, health, social infrastructure, and judicial reform. Between 2000 and 2004, Chile’s economy will have achieved growth more than 50% higher than that of the developed countries, and nearly twice that of Latin America as a whole.

Recovering dignity and refusing to forget

Approximately 30,000 individuals have testified before Chile’s Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture about the illicit acts they suffered after the 1973 military coup. During a six-month period, specially-selected attorneys, social workers, and psychologists listened to people who, in many cases, were talking for the first time about their experiences.

In addition to telling their personal stories, most of the witnesses offered evidence of the enormous costs they suffered, through the destruction of their plans for the future and the stigmas they confronted later. Detainees lost their jobs, saw their families torn apart, retained physical and psychological scars, and often fell into poverty, with many unable to provide education for their children.

In August, the Commission will deliver the information gathered to the President, along with its recommendations for State measures to help repair the damage suffered by the detainees, in accordance with the government’s Human Rights Proposal, *There is no tomorrow without yesterday*, released in August 2003.

Some 60% of the individuals interviewed had been detained and tortured by organism of the military government during the first year after the coup. They included both male and female, professionals, white-collar employees, workers, farmers and university students, most between 20 and 40 years of age. Many had no political or union affiliation, and were brought to detention centers on mere suspicions.

A voice in international controversies

On the tour which took him to Spain, Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador in late May, President Lagos not only addressed numerous topics of bilateral interest, but also took the time to focus on issues of current importance to the international community: the situations in Iraq and Haiti, terrorism, the importance of strengthening international organizations, and integration processes among countries.

DID YOU KNOW?

★ Chilean civil and mechanical engineer Gonzalo Rojo, 57, was named Man of the Year by Suzuki of Japan, in honor of his distinguished career and his contributions to the company. Rojo currently manages the Technical Division of Derco, Suzuki’s representative in Chile.

★ The alerce, a tree measuring up to 55 meters in height, boasts the second-highest longevity of any living thing on the planet: it can live between 2,000 and 3,000 years. It is found only in southern Chile and a portion of Argentina. By reading its rings, Chilean scientist Antonio Lara was able to shed light on climatic conditions in this part of the Earth during the past 3,620 years.

★ The *kinwa*, or *quínoa*, is similar to rice, but with a darker color and smaller grains. It has medicinal qualities as well as high nutritional value. It served as a basic food for the Aymara people, inhabitants of the Andean plains in the country’s extreme north. Along with other cultivated plants of indigenous origin, Chilean chefs have begun to incorporate it into their recipes, with great success.

FACTS

President Lagos has officially promulgated a new Civil Marriage Law, which for the first time includes provisions for divorce. The law will enter into force in November of this year.

During the first half of June, Chile signed agreements with Sweden and France to prevent double taxation.

More than 200,000 Chileans live outside the country in South and Central America, according to a registry prepared by the Foreign Ministry and the National Statistics Institute. The study, covering 15 countries, was the first to be carried out abroad. It was completed with success thanks to the high level of response among those surveyed.



The Spanish banking group BBVA has announced the installation in Chile of a development center for information applications related to pension administration, which will provide services to all of the group's pension subsidiaries in Latin America.

Chile was the focus of the 32nd Huesca International Film Festival, that took place from June 10 to 19. Animated, dramatic and documentary films were shown, in addition to the latest premieres from Chilean directors.



Estación de invierno of Pamela Espinoza

In Madrid, the President made an important stop at the Atocha train station, where he and his wife, Luisa Durán, paid their respects to the victims of the March 11 terrorist attack. Standing with the family of the only Chilean victim, the President reaffirmed his commitment to work on behalf of human life and “a future without terrorism.” In his first meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, he underlined the political, social, and cultural values shared by Chile and Spain. In the name of these values, he called upon Spain to contribute troops to the peacekeeping mission which UN member countries, including Chile, are undertaking in Haiti.

In an encouraging encounter, the leading Spanish investors in Chile met with the President to announce significant projects aimed at making Santiago a platform for their Latin American operations. Later, President Lagos visited the Barcelona Forum, where he participated in the launch of the album *Neruda in the Heart*, recorded by foreign artists to honor the centennial of the poet's birth.

At the Guadalajara Summit, the President spoke in support of social cohesion and the urgent need to strengthen multilateral institutions. Together with the Presidents of Mexico and Spain, he issued a call demanding respect for Iraqis' human and political rights, a proposal which was later incorporated into the new UN resolution on Iraq.

APEC from south to north

Unusual activity prevailed in the southern Chilean resort town of Pucón during the last week of May and the first week of June. On the shores of Villarrica Lake, the second APEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM II) was held, along with the third meeting of APEC Ministers of Trade. The APEC leaders' summit will take place in November in Santiago.

The ministers agreed to work toward renewed progress in the Doha Round negotiations, taking advantage of the currently-favorable global environment for advancement in the liberalization of world trade.

The APEC Senior Officials commended Chile for its responsible policies aimed at liberalizing and facilitating investment and trade. They pointed especially to the country's gradual reduction of tariffs, its flexible exchange rate, its structural surpluses, and the simplification of its customs procedures. Also earning accolades were Chile's commitment to the WTO and its simultaneous pursuit of unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral trade liberalization.

And gathering for the first time in Antofagasta, in northern Chile, the APEC Ministers of Mining confirmed their agreement to maintain ongoing dialogue through periodic meetings. They further pledged to move ahead with a working plan defining the overarching issues which must be addressed collectively, such as trade facilitation and the elimination of tariff and customs barriers.

Investment Welcome

The invitation has been issued: Chile offers the world favorable conditions for doing business. In its most recent report on foreign investment in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC identified Chile as having the region's most stable economy, giving it the highest ranking in the areas of corruption levels, competitiveness, general business climate, and risk classification. According to the Commission, foreign investment expanded by 58% in 2003, while foreign capital in the country reached 2.982 billion dollars.

Taking advantage of the benefits of the numerous trade agreements signed by Chile – including FTAs with the European Union, United States, and South Korea – numerous foreign companies have made Chile their regional platform. In addition, 12 international agreements concluded by Chile eliminate double taxation, while tariffs only reach 6% for those countries currently without an agreement.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT

"Voting by citizens is a right, and it also forms part of the participative duty held by all of us, since through the vote, Chilean men and women choose the proposals they think are most in agreement with their views of the world and their ideas for making Chile a better country."

On the proposed constitutional reform establishing automatic voter registration and voluntary voting.
Santiago, June 14, 2004

Economic growth with social cohesion "requires multilateralism to predominate in the world, wherever differences are discussed and consensus-building takes place. We cannot achieve this alone. We must achieve it by working with others who view us with respect and have confidence in us. If we do not seek partners for the creation of a world with fair and equal rules, in the end, the rules will be imposed by the strongest."

Opinion column in the Buenos Aires newspaper *Clarín*.
June 14, 2004

"Chile has achieved the most favorable economic position in its history. Our task is to ensure that this advance is not halted. We will continue to struggle to achieve economic growth. And thanks to this growth, we will implement public policies that help distribute its benefits to those who need it most. This is, and will continue to be, the mainspring of my administration."

In his Message to the Nation.
National Congress.
Valparaíso, May 21, 2004



Ojos del Caburgua



Colchagua

Recently, JP Morgan raised Chile's rating to "B minus," placing it among the countries in which investments are expected to prove more profitable, accompanied by low credit risk. In January, Standard & Poor's also raised its risk classification for Chile, from "A-" to "A."

Insistent books

It might be called a library that makes house calls – no matter how remote or isolated the place might be. For example, on the island of Quemchi, in the Chiloé archipelago, the books arrive by boat. Chile's Library, Archive and Museum Authority (Dibam) has set out to ensure that the people read, in all corners of Chile. In pursuit of this aim, it persistently "pesters" them with books.

The barrage has been intense. In addition to the library boat, there are also library buses, "traveling boxes," and train cars full of books which make several-day



stops in communities across the country. Recently, "Book Huts" have appeared in open-air markets, lending books to local people who promise to return them the following week. Small libraries have also been installed in the Metro, as well as in hospitals and prisons.

Along with this unprecedented extension of the library system, Chilean libraries have changed their approach to serving the public. The idea is to transform libraries into community meeting places, where people can browse the bookshelves, read magazines, attend workshops, listen to oral readings, learn computer skills – or simply "find the book they have been looking for about raising rabbits or preparing good homemade jam."

A route along the route

A different alternative for visitors exploring Chile is offered by the country's so-called "routes," focusing on areas ranging from wine to saltpeter deposits, from cheese to hot springs. The routes are specific circuits which depart from the traditional tourist itineraries, helping visitors gain a more in-depth view of Chile's people, its culture, and traditions, as well as the cuisine and wildlife of different parts of the country.

The first trail of this type was established in 1996: the Wine Route, which meanders through the vineyards and wineries of the Colchagua Valley, in the heart of the Chilean countryside. Today, an additional seven similar routes traverse the Sixth and Seventh Regions. Pisco (grape brandy) has its own route in the Fourth Region, extending from La Serena to Vicuña, in the magical Elqui Valley. The clear skies of the zone also inspire visitors to stop at the La Silla, Tololo, and Mamalluca Observatories.

New alternatives are also available to help visitors appreciate the rich archeological heritage of Chile's north. In Arica, six aerial tours reveal the geoglyphs of the Azapa and Lluta Valleys in all of their splendor, allowing tourists to fly over them in a paraglider. In addition, the High Andean Plains Route unites San Pedro de Atacama, in the Second Region, with Machu Picchu, in Peru. The route crosses Bolivia, with part of its path coinciding with the ancient Inca Trail.

In southern Chile, a 500-kilometer route provides close-up views of the Ninth Region's imposing volcanoes, traverses three national parks and reveals numerous lakes with crystalline waters. Another circuit extends from the coast to the mountains, passing through communities of the Mapuche and Pehuenche indigenous peoples. In the Tenth Region, visitors can take a closer look at the booming salmon industry, while in the extreme south of the country, the "Route of the Penguins" is followed by some 40,000 people each summer, who come to see the Magellanic penguins nesting in areas between Punta Arenas and Otway Sound.

Nicanor Parra

"Anti-poetry" is 50 years old. If the Chilean "anti-poet" were to turn such a respectable number into one of his "artifacts," he would probably state that his verses would not tolerate solemn treatment for this reason, nor the pompous condescension of time.

In May 1954, Nicanor Parra published *Poemas & Antipoemas*, a book of strange, irreverent and disconcerting sounds. Its reading continues to produce the same effect today. Parra changed the parameters of that which was accepted as poetry, calling for a revolution, without defined content, spreading in all directions. It affected not only Chile, but also the rest of the world, which was fascinated with the fine irony of his verses, the vitality of his words and the lucidity of his uncompromising message: "For half a century, poetry was the paradise of the solemn fool. Until I came and set up my roller coaster. Climb aboard, if you like. Of course I am not responsible if you climb down again bleeding from your mouth and nose" (*Versos de Salón*, 1962).

After the impact came recognition and awards, along with not a few critics. Even Pablo Neruda became involved in the controversy, but he avoided the self-righteousness of other authors: "I was wrong about you— he told Parra. I thought you were not a poet, but you are a poet."

In keeping with the contradictions of his work, the poet is also a physicist and mathematician. Preparing for his 90th birthday in September, he is planning to air his voice once again. More than 15 years have passed since he published his last book, but this fact doesn't concern him. Exposure has not taken away his dream; he comes from a provincial family from which he inherited the talent and versatility he shares with his nine siblings. Violeta, the folk singer and artisan, is also part of the clan that grew up near Chillán, in the Eighth Region.

His handwritten papers fill all the corners of his home in Las Cruces, on Chile's central coast, where he works in jealously-guarded secrecy to edit a book containing his acceptance speeches for the Honorary Fellow degree granted to him by Oxford University in 2000, and the Queen Sofía Poetry Prize, which he won in 2001. It also includes unpublished texts written for award ceremonies he did not attend – for years, Parra has not been going to the ceremonies organized in his honor. In 2000, with a simple "I'm not going," he disembarked from the plane which would have taken him to a seminar on anti-poetry at Harvard. He also refuses to visit Santiago, where his children and grandchildren live, declaring that he could suffer an asthma attack simply by setting foot on the city's soil.

There is no doubt about the continuing importance of his work: it occupies a prominent place in *Poems for the Millennium*, a huge and selective anthology published by the University of California; his face filled the cover of the January issue of the Italian periodical *Poesia*, which was dedicated to him; and his writings have recently been translated into Swedish, Czech, Hungarian and Greek. There is still more: the U.S. imprint New Directions will soon publish the anthology *More Antipoems*; the Galaxia Gutenberg publishing house will launch the first volume of his Complete Works, and in addition to his speeches, Chile's Diego Portales University will publish *Lear: Rey y Mendigo* (*Lear: King and Beggar*), his translation and "rewriting" of Shakespeare's classic.



AGENDA

- ★ May 24-June 2: Official Visit of the Minister of Defense, Michelle Bachelet, to China and Australia.
- ★ May 30-31: State Visit of President Lagos to Guatemala.
- ★ June 1: President Lagos attends the inaugural ceremonies in El Salvador.
- ★ June 4-5: Third Meeting of APEC Ministers of Trade, Pucón.
- ★ June 9-11: Official Visit of the Foreign Minister of Haiti, Yvon Siméon. Santiago.
- ★ June 15-17: First Meeting of APEC Ministers Responsible for Mining. Antofagasta.
- ★ June 24-25: Assembly of the Indigenous Fund. Santiago.

OVERHEARD

"Up to today, Chile has created a highly favorable environment for investment and trade (...). I expressed to the Minister (Alvear) the pride we feel in the FTA with Chile, because Chile is a strong trading partner, not only bilaterally, but also because of the role it plays on the regional and global levels."

Robert Zoellick, U.S. Trade Representative.
Pucón, June 3, 2004

"Chile is a very powerful country, and it is different from the others in Latin America, especially in the economic sphere."

Watana Muangsook, Minister of Trade of Thailand.
Pucón, June 3, 2004

"We have invested a great deal of money during these years and will continue to do so. As we have said before, Chile is a country where one can stay, where there are only the normal risks of exporting, but no uncertainty. The legal system provides effective security, and we are very happy there."

Manuel Pizarro, Chairman of Endesa Spain.
Madrid, May 25, 2004

Telefónica has announced the investment of millions of dollars in mobile telephone systems in Chile, "which signifies that we believe very much in the development of its economy."

César Alierta, President of Telefónica.
Madrid, May 25, 2004