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Pablo Guayasamín, Ernesto Sábató, Ernesto Cardenal and Thiago de Mello, members of the Comité de Honor Internacional del Centenario de Pablo Neruda, with President Ricardo Lagos at La Moneda Palace.

Pablo Neruda turns 100

On the morning of July 12th, a train departed Santiago's Estacion Central headed for the poet's childhood. The pitter patter of rain, a sound Pablo Neruda often missed, accompanied the 300 passengers who undertook the three hour journey to the bard's hometown, Parral, 341 kilometers south of Santiago. The trip was peppered with memories and images of his railway trips alongside his father, engine driver José del Carmen Reyes.

Government officials, friends and family members boarded the Poet's Train to open the official celebration of the centennial of his birth and the immense legacy of his poetry. The travelers included President Ricardo Lagos, Ernesto Sábató, Thiago de Mello, Ernesto Cardenal and Pablo Guayasamín; members of the cabinet and Congress; academicians, writers, poets and Chilean and international artists.

During the journey among the landscapes so often described in Neruda's work, the radio station *Barcarola* broadcast the musical versions of *Alturas de Machu Picchu* (Los Jaivas) and *Poem 15* (Víctor Jara). There was time to celebrate Neruda the bon vivant with some of his favorite dishes: pear turnovers, cooked cherries, jerked beef, *empolvado* pastries and, naturally, a scrumptious *arrollado huaso* (home-style Chilean pork disk).

At the recently-opened Pablo Neruda station in Parral, President Lagos highlighted the man, the politician and the poet committed to Chile and the well-being of its people, as well as the heritage of his work which spread across the country and the world that day as a "murmur," a "rumor," a "sound." Only seven years the poet's junior, the deeply moved Argentinean writer Ernesto Sábató added: "This celebration demonstrates the vitality of a life and a work that, along with other traits, constitutes a testament to brotherhood and courage toward mankind."

The celebration culminated that evening in the Mapocho Station in Santiago with expressions taken from different episodes in the poet's life, including his active defense of over 2,000 exiles from the Spanish Civil War whom he brought to Chile aboard a cargo ship, the *Winnipeg*.

The party was massive too at Neruda's homes, now converted into museums. La Sebastiana, in Valparaíso, congregated over 40 mayors from around the world and hundreds of people participated in the longest poem ever written: two kilometers of verse and greetings that zigzagged down the narrow alleys of



DID YOU KNOW?

- ★ Chilean diplomat Juan Gabriel Valdés has been appointed Special Representative of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in Haiti. Valdés will lead the United Nations Stabilization Mission there, established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1542 of April 30, 2004.
- ★ The world also celebrated the centennial of the birth of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. One of the most memorable celebrations was the "Neruda en el corazón" concert held July 5th at Barcelona's Palau Sant Jordi. Singers such as Víctor Manuel, Joan Manuel Serrat, Ana Belén, Joaquín Sabina, and Miguel Bosé participated.
- ★ The night of June 23rd is Mapuche new year, known as *Wepantü*. Families or clans gather together to tell stories and share the traditions of their people in an evening charged with meaning and rituals: before dawn, the elderly, adults and children dip deep into the water of the nearest river, stream or brook to celebrate the rising sun and their purified spirits.

FACTS

For the first time in 5 years, Chile will log an effective surplus: 1.6% of GDP, according to Central Bank figures.

Chilean investment abroad grew by 132% in the first 5 months of the year, as compared to the same period in 2003.

Anglo-Australian metals company BHP Billiton will invest 1.71 billion dollars in Chile between 2004 and 2006. One of the most important projects involves a copper mine in the Second Region, which accounts for 800 million of the total figure.



Bibliometro, the Chilean program operating in several Santiago metro stops since 1996, will be replicated in Madrid starting next year. When announcing that 5 book lending modules will be set up there, City Hall underscored that the idea for the project came from Chile.

The New Zealand-based fishing company Sealord has partnered with the Chilean firm Friosur in an effort to become Spain's 4th largest distributor of seafood products.

the city's hills. Over 4,000 people traveled to his home at Isla Negra where he rests with his wife Matilde Urrutia looking out to sea. Fishermen, *buasos* on horseback, country dwellers and many grassroots organizations paid their respects to the poet with a pilgrimage and a colorful mass accompanied by song and guitars.

The same fondness was expressed in a 16-meter heart made of red apples assembled by the Association of Chilean Painters and Sculptors in the Plaza de la Constitución opposite La Moneda Palace. The organizer was José Balmes, a winner of the National Fine Arts award and one of the travelers aboard the *Winnipeg*.



The right to vote

Chileans are known to be responsible voters and abstention is traditionally low (12% in the latest elections for Congress, December, 2001). And that is despite the complexities of the process. Currently, the Constitution empowers citizens over age 18 register to vote and requires those who do to cast their ballots on voting day. The government wants to simplify the process: in late June, President Ricardo Lagos sent a bill to Congress designed to register people to vote automatically when they turn 18 and to repeal sanctions against those who fail to exercise their right to suffrage.

Securing approval of initiatives to enhance democracy is a pending task for the President: "In Chile, we cannot rest on our economic laurels and progress in social policies. We cannot continue to postpone the democratic reforms that have been left pending since the beginning of the transition."

The President noted that he hoped that Congress would approve the bill "so that all Chileans become enfranchised citizens as soon as we turn 18 and can decide for ourselves, henceforth, what kind of a country we want, what form our society should take. That's why we have elections."

Competing with added value

A strain of bacteria has become an important player for Chilean copper. The bug has the leading role in a pilot project undertaken by Codelco since 2001 devised to halve copper production costs (the nation's leading export) and quadruple known ore reserves in the process.

After three years of laboratory work, Biosigma, a firm created by Codelco and Nippon Mining & Metals for this scientific endeavor, announced that they had isolated the first bacteria with strong leaching properties in low grade copper ore. Industrial implementation is slated to commence within five years.

The procedure involves applied biotechnology, a field of science found in many developed nations where the advantages its use brings to their economies are clear. Chile aspires to be on the same page: late last year, President Lagos announced a national policy to foster biotech and bolster its use in natural resource-intensive sectors, thereby increasing the value of the nation's exports.

In Chile there are now 31 biotech companies and permanent research projects, such as Genoma Chile (www.genomachile.cl). Work is underway to create better quality peaches, nectarines and table grapes that are resistant to pathogens, with a view toward diminishing the use of agricultural chemicals. Transgenic vines have been created that are resistant to *Botrytis*, a fungus that wreaks havoc when it rains a few days before the harvest. In the area of aquaculture, systems have been devised to detect viruses in salmon using molecular analysis.

Chile is home to 41 post-graduate programs in biotechnology and in 2004 the government granted 198 scholarships to Ph.D. candidates in the sciences, slated

QUOTATIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT

"We want to tell Pablo Neruda that we are all working to forge a better Chile than the one we have today. We want to tell him that we ask ourselves his question who are the ones who suffer? and that we share his answer I don't know, but they are mine. We want to tell him that we have learned that the greatness of a nation is built on the blocks of common purpose, with the participation of all, without exclusions, and that literary works such as his is the firm, visible, happy stitching of the seam that sustains the unity of our people."

A hundred years later, "here stands Chile, ready to confront the adventure of the 21st century with the realism that recognizes life without suppressing it, but that does not refuse to dream, to look to mystery in order to keep from capsizing in midstream. If we do that, Pablo Neruda will remain alive in the hearts of all Chileans and, from Chile, Pablo Neruda will continue to speak to the rest of the world."

At the Pablo Neruda
Centennial celebration.
Parral, July 12, 2004

"If we were able to provide resources to create employment programs when Chile's economy was faltering, there is all more reason for us to maintain those initiatives now that the economy is growing, because having a job is tied to people's dignity."

On government subsidies
to promote contracting.
Santiago, June 30, 2004

One of the main issues Latin American countries need to resolve is that "our democratic political system goes hand-in-hand with economic growth and rising social cohesion... That is why we need to judge the contribution of economic growth not only in terms of increases in private income, but also by the expansion of social services that such economic growth makes possible."

During the inauguration of the seminar
Democracy, Economy and Society,
organized by the U.N. Development
Programme, UNDP.
Santiago, June 21, 2004

to increase to 500 in 2008. In mid June, a Consulting Council on the Bicentennial Program on Science and Technology was convened and tasked with strengthening innovation and ties between the corporate world and researchers. The effort is funded jointly by the Government of Chile and the World Bank, with an investment of 100 million dollars.

A rising star

The local olive oil industry has made enormous strides of late. Exports commenced in 2001, totaling 4,244 dollars. By the following year, they had risen to 25,040 dollars and jumped to 158,000 dollars by 2003. During the first quarter of 2004, exports to the U.S. alone totaled 93,814 dollars which, compared to the same quarter the preceding year, represents an increase of 3,700%.



The government and the private sector are committed to bringing olive oil to export stardom, competing effectively with the best varieties in the world. They have set their sights on exporting 160 million dollars worth of product within five years. By then, there will be 10,000 hectares of olive plantations in Chile, with a potential exporting capacity of 20,000 tons a year of extra virgin oil. To reach that goal, the private sector has invested 60 million in plantations and processing plants in the past five years.

Small scale production of olive oil in Chile dates back to the colonial era in the 17th century. Starting in the 1990s, however, government support helped local olive growers receive training and acquire new technology, which has led to the outstanding results.

Although it is hard to compete with countries such as Spain in terms of volume, responsible for half of worldwide production, the quality gap can be closed. With good reason, in April the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* described local olive oil as "the Chilean threat." Recently, the extra virgin Olave, produced by Agrícola Valle Grande, received the most important award in the "Fruttato Medio" category at the XIII international content Leone d' Oro dei Mastri Oleari 2004 held in Parma. The acknowledgment makes it the best oil in the world in its class.

Talent and perseverance

After twelve years, the young pianist Mahani Teave returned to Easter Island where she raised. She gave an emotionally charged concert at the jam-packed local church, including pieces by Beethoven, Bach, Debussy, De Falla, Chopin, Liszt, Mozart and Villa-Lobos. As a *gran finale* she interpreted Brahms and Fauré in a "four hands" concert alongside her maestro and benefactor, Chilean pianist Roberto Bravo. Having her return to the island and playing "as peers" held profound meaning for him.



It meant a lot to Mahani too. Her story is full of talent, but also of hard work and perseverance. She came home to prove to the young people on the island how important it is for them to struggle for their goals and cultivate their talents. And to encourage them to grapple with the obstacles posed by isolation and the lack of opportunities as she did.

At the age of 9, the pianist departed the island for the conservatory at the Universidad Austral de Valdivia, in southern Chile. She is currently enrolled at the Cleveland Institute of Music in the United States, on a scholarship from the Roberto Bravo and Amigos del Teatro Municipal foundations and Kodak Corporation. She also recently received the Chilean Presidential Scholarship.

Some 1,500 people attended a concert she offered with Roberto Bravo at La Moneda Palace on June 16.

Child and adolescent orchestras

Hard work, studies, but particularly a contagious enthusiasm are what motivate the over 6,000 children and adolescents who make up 145 orchestras around the country. They are elementary and secondary school students who share a love of music, the eagerness of their age and a singular commitment: working and practicing hard to make their instruments sing true.

These musicians range in age from 6 to 24; 85% of them come from the lower social classes. While many could be described as coming from “at risk” environments, forming part of an orchestra has kept them off the streets, away from drugs and crime. This change can be seen in both the children and their parents, and even in the surrounding community. Music helps families galvanize their hopes and mobilizes them around the efforts and dedication of their sons and daughters.

In June the Foundation for Child and Adolescent Orchestras, directed by the President's wife, Luisa Durán, celebrated its third anniversary. The foundation seeks to stimulate social, educational and musical development around the country and has had outstanding results: since 2001, almost all of the existing orchestras have been formed. The organization has provided over 1,000 scholarships, organized national gatherings, festivals at Santiago's Municipal Theater, 60 seminars on symphonic instruments and 56 video conferences for children living in outlying areas.

In March 2004, the Curanilahue Youth Orchestra, the first one and the example followed by many, said its farewell in a gala concert in the Plaza de la Constitución, opposite La Moneda Palace. After eight years of hard work its members – the children of forestry workers, small scale miners, retirees and public servants in the Eighth Region – graduated from high school. Several will be going on to college. But the orchestra lives on: 85 children are studying in the hopes of forming part of the second generation.

The most novel of the orchestras performed publicly for the first time just recently. Composed of indigenous Mapuche children, the instruments are all native, including the *kultrún* (a drum made of hollowed-out tree trunk covered in goat skin), the *trompe* (circular metallic instrument), and *wada* (gourd with seeds inside). The group traveled eight hours from their native Tirúa, a secluded coastal town, for their debut in the city of Concepción.



AGENDA

- ★ July 7-8 : Participation of President Lagos in the Mercosur Presidential Summit. Puerto Iguazú, Argentina.
- ★ July 15-16 : 3rd National Tourism Summit, 2004. Hotel del Mar, Viña del Mar.
- ★ July 19-20 : Working visit by President Lagos to the United States. Meetings with President George Bush, IMF President Rodrigo Rato, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.
- ★ July 21 : President Lagos attends Caricom Summit. Kingston, Jamaica.
- ★ July 21 : Working visit by President Lagos to Haiti. Meeting with Chilean peacekeeping forces on the UN mission.

OVERHEARD

“On behalf of the writers of the world, I have come with fervor to render homage to one of the greatest Hispanic-American poets of all times. I feel overwhelmed by the triumph of a people over treason, of the triumph of poetry over all efforts to standardize humankind.”

Ernesto Sábato, Argentinean writer.
Parral, July 12, 2004

“We chose Santiago because it is the best city in Latin America to do business in. We value the people's skills, its modern infrastructure, its direct access to the main cities in the Americas, its safe environment and growing cosmopolitan flair.”

Julio Moura, Chairman Grupo Nueva, which will open offices in Chile.
El Nuevo Herald, July 1, 2004

“In Chile one finds highly innovative things (...). I have been pleasantly surprised by the firm fiscal discipline applied in the country, it can be used as an example for other countries (...), this fiscal surplus is very modern.”

José Luis Escrivá, Senior Economist of the BBVA group.
Santiago, June 16, 2004

“It is a privilege to have President who includes technology issues in his platform, meets with the Chilean Association of Information Technology Companies (ACTI), and jointly agrees on the appointment of a CIO for information technology and the creation of a digital agenda.”

Edgar Witt, General Manager of Hewlett Packard Chile.
Santiago, June 14, 2004