

Speech for the Young Nation. 1964.*

People of Chile: As in the times of the discovery of Chile, a time of memorable historical events, we are now owners of our Homeland by means of this great union between the north and the south.

All of you, young patriots who have marched here, you are much more than a mere political Party, much more than an electoral event. You are indeed the true Young Nation in motion.

At a time when many Chileans doubted the future of their Nation; a time in which many believed our nation had lost its vigor and its wisdom, when several began to fear and prepared to leave Chile; an hour in which many thought this country was falling apart, and when the hearts of so many, and so many poor Chileans, seemed to shelter a kind of bitterness and skepticism around institutions, the laws, and those leading the country: YOU have brought forth an answer; one that represents an affirmation of faith before doubt, an affirmation of courage before cowardice.

And this answer could not come from one single man. It had to come from Chile as a whole. As many other great events that leave a mark in history and that truly represent the soul of a nation, this simple march began. I wonder: was it twelve? Or was it twenty who took the first step by the time this idea emerged, when it was set forth by Germán Becker? They were so few that some actually believed this would be no more than a simple walk by the youth. A mere act of propaganda, maybe only a glimpse of youthful enthusiasm.

The people, however, sharply as a ray of light breaks through the darkness, began to see themselves in you. They then started to come out to the roads, squares and streets. "There they come", people said as they came out holding up flags; but above all, they kept their hearts open to welcome you, young patriots of Chile, who have come out to take on their country and transform it. Thank you! Thank you! You have done even more than that. I would say: you have united your Homeland. You have integrated its geography. You, young patriots from the north, have brought to us a lesson of heroism. Your feet still bear some salt from the *pampa*¹ and dust from the desert; copper and iron, silver and niter impregnate your skin. You have brought the north to us.

* Speech for the Young Nation, held at Parque Causiño, on June 21st 1964. (Extract).

¹ Translator's note: the word *pampa* refers to large plains with no arboreal vegetation.

You, young patriots from the South; your songs have touched the ancient araucarias and millenary larches whose charred trunks resemble cemeteries of ancient heroes to travelers. In your eyes we find lakes, river and forests. In your hands: the fruits of our land.

You have arrived flanked by two fellow friends: the mountain range and the sea, which always stand by our side. And you bring us a lesson. The lesson taught by our land, by the Chilean territory that loves us and eagerly hungers and expects our love back, like a great love, like a close friend.

What does the land, the Chilean land tell us? Take care of me, so that I will not topple into the sea, leaving you without land to harvest! What do the rivers tell us? Take care of me, because each liter of my water is meant to nurture your soil! What do trees cry out to us? Do not burn us! Do not cut us down unnecessarily, because in our hearts we have many years to serve you, to bring you rain, to hold back your deserts and keep your rivers.

You bring this lesson to Chile, which belittled many times, fails to be aware that it has a land to love, the way we love a beloved friend. You bring us a message. Let us build a new Homeland. We have the land and we have the craftsmen. We have Chile, transformed into a new manifestation of human solidarity and social justice. This is the message you have brought forth, a message with no external mandate, but one echoed by the sound of our own steps as we walk over our own Chilean ground. That is the reason why you are here and, you have not only brought with you this message of the Earth, the mountain, and the sea; you have also brought the clamor of the Chilean people.

Why has this crowd never been the same before in the entire history of Chile? How many are there here? Three or four hundred thousand? Who might count them? Who can defy reality with propaganda? Why are you here? Because you are the answer, the message, you are the clamor of Chile.

This movement and this man standing here before you, represent the realization of great tasks that the future of this Homeland holds for us; tasks that signify a revolution in liberty; a profound transformation of Chile. My voice has never held such authority as it does now, being supported by your presence, since now it is the voice of Chile.

With you, we will build the economic development of Chile.

We will raise the agricultural condition of Chile so that the land feeds the Chilean people. This will be a task of the highest priority during my Administration.

We will develop the industry. Chile is provided with a well-defined industrial future, granted by the quality of its workers, its raw materials, and its diligent tradition. This Nation must provide you, thousands of young patriots, with work; employment in new modern industries, in extended facilities of the ones existing already, in factories so that you elaborate, transform, and exploit our wealth. We will carry out this industrial effort so as to elaborate food products and to place value in agricultural work.

We will define bold mining policies for the refining, melting and industrialization of copper and iron, so that the best interest of Chile, represented by the Chilean State, always has the final word on trade, on the conditions in which Chilean products will be developed in our country, together with their destination.

We will conquer the international markets so that not only raw material and products leave our country, but also products elaborated by the work of Chileans, thus turned into something valuable and noble. We will not lock ourselves up. We will go out to contend with Chilean hands, Chilean products, with our imagination pointed towards the world market”.

(...) I believe that in order for us to accomplish this task you must become great guardians. Youth is not only about enthusiasm; to be of importance for the country, its heart has to remain clean and pure. Chile cries for a high sense of morality. It has grown tired of those seeking to make profit and taking advantage. People wish for honesty in leadership. Consequently, you, young patriots: keep your heart pure, thus you will be able to serve your Party and your Nation. Allow your voices not only to scream out, but bring out messages instead. Keep your head full of ideas, and not merely full of enthusiasm, and thus you will always lead the way. Be joyful. You have a great Nation and you will be witnesses of great days in the years to come: a young population with a high sense of morality and clarity of thought will crush the *caudillos*², the *caciques*³, those looking to make profit only and always eager to bathe in reflected glory. Watch over this movement; do not let it go to ruin. Above all, this country is in need of a moral message, and not political parties serving as employment offices.

This campaign, you see, is a response to this march. Among the slogans you were showing, none of them contained an insult. You brought only songs, joy, and youth. I have seen

² Translator’s note: the word *caudillo* refers to a person leading an army or a community.

³ Translator’s note: the word *cacique* refers to a person who exercises power abusively within a community or group.

great formations marching, and not a single sign against anyone. You have brought only chants of friendship, patriotism and virile energy. That is the lesson we are giving to Chile.

Thus, in this hour when we are under attack, when the treacherous stone, the false insult or the infamous slander attempts to bite you or bite me, you have seen that I have not bent to pick up what has been thrown at me. I could not do it, for that would be ruining this immense march of the Chilean people. We should stop? Why should we? You see; why are we being attacked? Is it maybe because we will loose? We are under attack because we are feared; we are feared because they know we will overcome, and because we are strong; we can afford ourselves the supreme right of the strong: to remain calm before the vile attack.

Today I want to express something that I was already aware of yesterday, but that now has become certain: We are putting together a campaign without harming others, because tomorrow I will be President of all Chileans: those supporting me and those attacking me, as well.

And we will give shape to an Administration which will not only guarantee economic progress, justice, and a responsible insertion of the Chilean people to the task and its benefits, but we will achieve this in liberty and respecting human rights; in freedom of worship, of speech, in freedom of association, and in political freedom. For we, during all our lives, have asserted respect towards rights and liberty. Those who wish to be part of these rights and liberties have nothing to fear from us.

In this hour, when many have given me their full support for so many different reasons, there is only one common reason to support me: the consecution of Democracy, truly and not only as a formality; the achievement of a true justice reflected not only in speeches, backed up by facts; the achievement of a true economic development; not one reflected in figures only. That is the reason of my calling to all Chileans. The answer given by the right and left winged parties has been generous; an unconditional response to a political program, whose only owner is the Chilean people.

Friends from the north and south, how could I express how I feel? The very thought of the men whom I started my life with, and who are here, standing before you. How could I express what you mean to me?

Last night, I imagined or thought to have heard...how could I have known?! I saw a boy running to his father, telling him: - There they come! There they come! They come from Arica!

They are walking through Tarapacá! They have reached Concón, Placilla! Watch them going up Cuesta de Chacabuco! Look at the others passing through Cancha Rayada, Rancagua and reaching Maipú! Father, who are they? Are they the Christian Democrats?

- No, they are more than that...
- Are they followers of Frei?
- No, my son, they are much more than that...
- What, then, father?
- Son, can you not see the flags? They are the same ones, the ones from 1810, the ones from 1879, from 1891. They are our Nation!

Yes, my friends, you are. You are the Homeland. The Homeland, thank God!

Translated by Omar Silva M. (2009).