

Announcement Speech for his candidacy for the Senate of Chile¹. 1956. (*)

Mr. President of the *Falange Nacional*²; neighborhood leaders, House of Representatives candidates; municipal councilmen; dear friends.

I believe it will be easy for you to comprehend the profound emotion overwhelming me. Ever since the moment when I, encouraged by my Party and by important independent groups, decided to officially announce my candidacy as Senator for the province of Santiago, I have received countless signs of affection. Nevertheless, it should be stated that a campaign of quiet murmurs has come forth. One of straight but evasive allusions; one of small lies and slanders too fearful to come to the surface, but which, nevertheless, come across, trying to undermine the strength of this movement.

Against this, I have kept a disdainful silence, for I believe this country to be tired of personal polemics and negative trifles. I have kept only one answer to myself, one that I would not give myself; you give it today, in this immensely overflowing theatre, which might have never been as crowded as it is now by the people of Chile: vibrant, enthusiastic and determined.

For this morning, my friends, within this theatre, there is a protagonist. It is not I, nor the speakers, not even those who have organized this gathering. The protagonists are the people of Chile. For over the last years the word has been around that faith and hope were now impossible to be renewed; that people were filled with bitterness over the continuous deception and treacherous acts they had suffered; that they were now unable to believe in anything or anyone; that any action against this widespread skepticism among the Chilean people was hopeless. This morning, the people teach us a new lesson. They reveal to us that it is the land itself, the land we walk on, which guards the living seeds of all of the resurrections. They also

¹ Translator's note: Eduardo Frei Montalva becomes candidate for Senator representing Santiago.

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² Translator's note: "*Falange Nacional*" is the name adopted by the *Juventud Conservadora* (Conservative Youth) at the moment of departing from the Conservative Party in 1938, thus becoming an independent political party.



reveal that, despite of being betrayed so many times, they are always willing to start anew. They stand up, once again, to claim that we have stood together not to work for just one man, but to work for justice and for Chile.

Overall, being here today entails an enormous responsibility upon me. Thus, this morning I feel obliged to apologize for giving myself the liberty to talk to you with great simplicity, and with clear words.

Gentlemen: we are not giving birth to a new type of Personalism, as it has been said before, nor to a new type of mediocre *caudillaje*³; even less to a movement centered around one man; one that might be dressed up with so many qualities that he appears able to solve all problems by himself. You cannot allow yourselves to believe that, nor would I be able to accept that, ever. My friends, I am not an adventurer or a neglecting man. To be precise, I am a man who belongs to a Party; to be even more accurate, I am a Christian Democrat.

My belief and my ideas are the same as those men who, nearly eleven years ago, pulled together a destroyed Europe; with its peoples pulled apart, with its moral dissolved; its youth taught to kill and rob in open or underground struggle. A Europe with its industries crushed and its cities reduced to rubble. These men were chosen to lead the people of the free West, and they knew how to preserve, above all, full Liberties. How mysterious is the fact that in these countries, where powerful Communist Parties and tremendous dissociating forces used to reside, the Governments, inspired by the same ideas I profess, did not restrict political freedom or freedom of association! No one could ever reproach them for taking the slightest tentative steps towards restricting freedom of worship. Protestants, atheists, skeptics, rationalists, they have all lived the age of greater liberty Europe has ever seen, in times when it was totally ruined, to achieve, later on, maximum efficiency in reconstructing and restoring their societies.

It has also been said that I belong to a small political party. It is true. Each party, movement, every force born organically, starts off being small. Then, if provided with meaning and not being based on passions or greed or personal hatred, they evolve. I believe we have affirmed principles rather than passions; ideas and not greed. For this reason, I will always consider it better to belong to a small party with great ideas, instead of a great party with gradually smaller ideas.

³ Translator's note: the word *caudillaje* refers to the leadership or the rule of a "*caudillo*" (a person leading an army or a community). However, the concept is also understood as the abuse of power exerted by an authority figure.



There is also a very true point: belonging to a political party is one thing, being a victim of partisanship is another. If parties serve the interests of their members instead of those of their Nation; if they are not up to interpreting the immense mass of Chilean people, which, as it occurs almost everywhere, do not belong to a definite party but tilt towards the ones reading their thoughts and feelings better, then they, the political parties, prove purposeless.

Throughout these years, through the proposals I have formulated and the few opportunities I have had to act upon, I, in agreement with my party, have exposed problems to the country and proposed solutions that extend beyond the interests of parties, thus reaching the wide opinion of our Nation. That is the reason why this theatre is overflowing today, with an immense mass of people that do not belong to any political party; a mass of men aiming to support ideas, and not names, for the wellbeing of our Homeland and for the social purpose we have been affirming.

This immense mass of politically independent men may be defined through some traits that are common among Chileans. The first one is their profound sense of patriotism, their love for Chile, and the pride they take on being Chileans. The second one, their desire for progress; the desire to witness our Homeland remaking itself and taking the lead. The third one, their deep sense of social justice, and then, finally, their unanimous aspiration for a profound moral honesty in the Administration and in the totality of public office positions, which is essential for our future actions.

For that reason, the meaning of this gathering surpasses the mere support of just one person. It is the expression of our people moving forward. Therefore, I would say that we are not even here to support a political program. People have seen so many programs followed by so many failures and lies!

Thus, I would like to say, by means of this campaign - which might be called an anti-promising campaign - that this is more than only one man standing before you, this is more than a political program; this is about a set of ideas, principles that can bind us together, principles able to lead us towards the future.

But, ladies, gentlemen and friends: which are the deeds that Chile would have to undertake in its immediate future? I am sure that if they were listed, everyone would say: "But, we knew this already! They are simple and easy to come up with!" And more than just one, ready to hang on every word to criticize them later, would tomorrow say: - There was nothing new, nothing at all. Those essential things, my friends, those simple tasks in need of undertaking are already well-known by everyone.

In first place - I would say - there is the need for this country to produce the food its people require. The "battle against hunger", as it has been called, must be undertaken. It is not acceptable for this country, having seven millions of inhabitants and an extensive territory, as has been argued by Radomiro Tomic, to be incapable of feeding its own people. It is not possible that countries twice as small as the province of Santiago or nations having fifty millions of people on only half of our territory are able to provide their people with bread, milk, and butter, while we have to go out, spending thousands of millions of pesos, enriching workers from other lands, farmers from other places, to buy the bread that our very Homeland has been unable to provide.

Thus, an agricultural policy is of primary urgency. Today, it would be hard for me to go into specific details; essentially, I would just say that there is one immediate task to be carried out: The farmers who produce, fertilize their lands and support their workers, those who are able to bring forth the fruits their lands have to offer, they shall receive all of the tax advantages and low prices! And those who allow their lands to die out, to be gradually covered by weeds without producing, while receiving the benefit of its appreciation, those ruining the prestige of the right to property, let them be punished to the fullest extent of the law!

What this country is in need for, along with an invigorated agriculture, is an industrial development capable of using its power and its resources in a profitable way; one embracing the remaining hands as agricultural techniques are refined, and offering stable employment through economic development.

Nor it is acceptable for the State to be the great employer for the stacked up amount of unemployed, and that millions of people, pushed by the lack of industrial development crushing the prospects of workers and technicians, and the youth itself, take shelter in it.

In third place, there is the need for the State to take on its role as planner, guide, director, and the role as executor of the great basic tasks. For as long as we have no roads, there will be no agricultural production, there will be no children who will be able to go to school or culture in the countryside. As long as we do not have large dams, the retrieval of large portions of fertile land will remain unattainable; as long as railways and modern and efficient ports are not built up and we continue being deprived from plentiful electric power, we will find ourselves unable to produce in reasonable terms. The State will have to carry forward the construction of great public works, basic works, without which, economical development, the spread of private initiative and of the private company sector, would not become possible.



Such conditions for development can take place without the need for theoretical questioning. Our Homeland has an enormous task ahead, one in which there is room for everyone. Just as the State has its own field, the private sector has one too. Within it there are men of initiative, men capable of exploiting the resources of the country, capable of clearing new paths for production, of creating thousands of employment sources. If they comply, then, they must receive protection and encouragement from a Nation that knows how to lead.

Finally, it is fundamental to maintain a high level of university education through which the country will get in contact with the world of scientific research. Scientific research is revolutionizing production and labor processes worldwide, thus determining the employment of workers and the well-being of the great masses of people. If the country is provided with a university education level which is unable to rise to the challenge, then it will fail to be in contact with human knowledge currently at the vanguard. Ignorance of those processes, therefore, will inevitably result in setbacks, poverty, even more, in misery and decadence. But determining the course of action is not enough, since plans are not robots. It is not enough for advisors from inland or abroad to give us a recipe, because people are moved by active ideas that can be put to test on a daily basis, by means of active men, capable of putting them to practice. Right now, does the country not agree that it is in our convenience to hold back the inflation process eating away our national economy? Everyone has plans; however, the practical problem the country has today lies in those leading it, those carrying the plans forward. In these "policies", gentlemen, it is necessary to be able to tell which sacrifices are necessary and which are not; to know which are the foreseen sacrifices and the unexpected ones, and those resulting from the incapacity of governors who cannot conceive or apply plans. What is even more, gentlemen; it is incredible that in this country, where everything is waiting to be done, where there are still five hundred thousand of houses to be built, where children and adults lack food, and where there is a lack of dignified clothing for thousands of men, at this moment, with the aim of stopping parasitic tasks, construction is being brought to a standstill, thus throwing millions to unemployment, and at the same time, destroying companies which with their capacity, organization, and techniques were moving towards the solution of the problem.

It will always be beyond my understanding that, in a country such as ours, a battle against inflation results in the standstill of the whole country, even worse, in being the cause of the worst tragedy that might befall upon people: unemployment. In a moment when the full stock of our copper and saltpeter is being sold, we witness the painful and depressing procession of the unemployed through streets and squares, as if the people did not have the right to demand from



the State, at least, the guarantee of the most essential right a man can have: the right to work and earn a living.

But a policy as the one we have just outlined demands some essential premises as well. There is no government, no programs, no possibility of creation if there is no example of morality set from those above, if people cannot see their leaders taking the first step in every sacrifice.

Secondly, there is no opportunity for constructive actions without the fulfillment of another demand: a minimum stability in the leadership of the State, including the leader's stability in judgment, and stability in the duration of the term of office of governing positions.

If time and devising, if in-depth study and knowledge are required for constructing a modern house or managing even the smallest of businesses; then, how much more stability would it be required to lead a country with its complex tasks and various problems! Ministers leaving office every six months do not even get to know the personnel of their ministries. Is it possible to lead the country under these terms? In those nations that truly have carried out a constructive task, regardless of their political stance, stability in leadership has always been maintained. In any case, an average or poor, yet strictly applied plan – which will eventually get somewhere – is better than the wavering attempts of those not knowing who to follow and where to go.

But this task is not only a problem concerning the stability in the judgment of the leader; it does not only concern moral strength, neither political stability within the government or only technical stability in leadership, this problem does not belong only to the man surrounded by efficient teams. This task, a task of the present, has to be carried forth by the Chilean people as a whole.

During the hundreds of gatherings organized through this campaign I have stated: The worst that may happen is that people delegate their responsibility to others. Leading a country is not an endeavor of technicians or managers; it is a task of the State, one that involves rapport among businessmen, technicians, and, above all, the people itself. For if the people do not understand this task, if they do not understand that their salvation has to come from themselves, if they think of every electoral process as being a mere waving of banners of enthusiasm encouraged by empty promises, then, the day after the triumph, they will fall prey to disenchantment. I have told you: the only way this country will be able to fight hunger is by producing food; the only way that this country builds houses where men can live with dignity is for everyone to take on the endeavor, for everyone to take responsibility in it with the conviction that what is being carried forth is a national effort, a serious popular effort that demands dedication and continuity. Salvation will not come from wizards pulling houses out of their hats



or out of decrees; the building of houses will come from a responsible technical leadership, when, brick by brick, Chilean hands build the walls of their own dwellings, through their own effort.

I have an immense faith that the people will understand the sense and grandeur of this task. I have walked through the poorest neighborhoods, where people, far from lacking homes, are in lack of tap water; people who are not even guaranteed basic police protection by the State.

They are left out from the advantages of a civilized country; however, within them there is a great will for sacrifice! I have seen in them the desire for progress. I have witnessed how, in each of these neighborhoods, they have assigned their most responsible members to lead and organize them.

Through their creation of cooperatives – cooperatives that barely no one taught them to create, and more so, which they have created rather intuitively – I have seen them save – listen well to this – over one billion pesos throughout fifty six housing cooperatives.

I have seen hundreds of men, thousands, thousands of them, together with their wives and sons, building their small houses by doing additional work on Saturdays and Sundays. With this picture in mind, I have wondered: Instead of coming here to manifest fake illusions, why do they not take better advantage of that good will, that openhanded will, all of those intentions to understand and to give to others? Why not start off with an organized plan, a scientific and methodical plan; one not resulting in overnight wonders, but one that truly clears the path to the future, thus to bring justice to this people – justice they truly need - and to enforce a true democracy instead of the democracy our country has now, a democracy startled by nearly three millions of people no longer living in poverty, but in misery.

Gentlemen: there are those who affirm that nothing can be achieved. There are those criticizing some workers for their dirty appearance, failing to notice that they – those who criticize – are able to water their parks and gardens, while these workers live one kilometer away from their main source, where they go in search of water to cook their meal. There are those demanding thousands of men and women to have delicate and refined manners, Louis XV courtly manners, while offering nothing better than neighborhoods buried in dust, with no houses, no running water, no light and no sidewalks. But, somehow, they expect them to wear spotless gloves and express themselves with elegance!

Therefore, as I am suggesting that effort to be made, I believe our primary national objective must be to improve the basic living conditions of these two and a half or three million people, and at least raise their level from the misery line to the poverty line.



But such an action demands effort, as nothing will be achieved through miracles or the deeds of a Messiah; it will take place as a result of an organized effort that includes all of us.

There is an idea I would like to conclude with. Gentlemen, my friends: Over the last years, the World has undergone an enormous transformation. Great nations and continents are getting organized with great markets, automatized industries, applying techniques that increase the productivity of the soil in almost mysterious ways. In universities, wise men are researched and, based on the foundations of science, we find immense possibilities that start to change the system of economic production and the entire system of our social life. In these times, the world witnesses a more profound transformation than what the discovery of steam came to be, in the beginnings of the last century. Those nations who fail to adapt to this reality; those unable to unite with others; those lacking a broader view of all these problems, and leaders who are taking the same approach, using the same language, and following the same way of thinking from thirty years ago to handle them, are all walking into a dead-end path.

Just as reactionary are those selfish people who believe that the benefits of wealth are only for them to enjoy, as are the extreme left-wing men who insist on preserving the same approaches we had thirty years ago, the same words, and images that have been proven as insufficient by much deeper and stronger realities. That is the reason why, when these men have taken power, they have committed tremendous mistakes, since all of their theoretical proposals were failing to account for the current transformations that contemporary society is going through at its core. Also, their worn out ways of thinking cannot respond towards the concrete responsibilities that power entails.

Thus – I repeat – from its very beginning, this campaign has absolutely surpassed its personal context. It is a campaign that aims to set forth ideas, broaden horizons, and create new paths. We do not pretend to create a new Chile, as others have claimed they would. Our intention is much more modest. During this election we will not buy the people with money that corrupts them or promises that weaken them and break them down. We are willing to approach this election basing ourselves on our straightforward presentation of what we consider our truth to be. Thus, we have the deepest conviction that, if it were to be interpreted by anyone, apart from me, in the future, there will be no way out other than those ideas earlier exposed. They bring dignity to the national environment. They set a moral possibility to destroy the dynamics which are currently pulling our country apart, and to create a constructive dynamics of true solutions, those which are truly able to bring real welfare to the people. Improving the life standard does not reside in words, decrees, laws or talks on democracy – which is always a



necessary assumption – but in the production of the fields, in houses being built, in people being able to dress well and also able to send their children to school.

Here, with all the nations of the world, this task will demand a plan and the time for it to be carried out. If complete fulfillment is not attained during this generation, at least we will be able to confidently claim the following: our women and children have inherited a dignified home, where they can live freely and safely.

Before I finish, I would like to thank the women of Chile. They are present in this theatre. They have been part of our campaign, bringing the strength based on moral renewal only they are able to provide; providing us with the generosity and the will for sacrifice demonstrated by those who have just started public work. We rely on their support, generosity, and nobility, more than we rely on any other influence to triumph.

Thanks to all of you who have contributed financially in order for this campaign to be performed efficiently, with dignity, and what is more important, my dear friends, with absolute independence.

Finally, I would like to say in this theatre, and before the people of Chile, that I ask God, with humility in my heart and from the depth of my soul, to allow me to be worthy of this day that will remain etched, more than in my memory, in my heart. And if I am to undertake tasks of responsibility in the future, I wish to be able to come home and say I was always there to stand up for the people, to work for justice, and to support liberty.

Thank you very much.

Translated by Omar Silva M. (2009)