

**NOTES FOR THE SPEECH BY H.E. RICARDO LAGOS,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE,
AT THE RECEPTION OFFERED BY
THE LORD MAYOR OF DUBLIN**

Dublin
July 11, 2003

Lord Mayor:

I wish to express my appreciation for the warm welcome extended by Dublin, a city founded more than seven centuries before Chile figured on the map of nations as the last frontier of a new continent.

The ancient and rich history of Dublin is evident in the care for its architectural heritage. A city that loves its own past, that loves its history, that is proud of its contribution to universal culture.

We are talking of the Irish monks who in the Early Middle Ages took care of Christian traditions for the rest of Europe.

And we are also referring to a long list of names: to Jonathan Swift and his ferocious political satires, to Bram Stoker and imagined monsters, to James Joyce, who reinvented the novel, to Samuel Beckett, to Oscar Wilde, to Seamus Heaney, among so many others.

Ireland has had to fight -through the centuries- to cultivate and preserve its national identity. And in that endeavour, the streets of Dublin and the Irish countryside have become part of the universal heritage.

Thus, it is not strange that tourism has flourished in Ireland, that this small and remote country -inhabited by friendly, hospitable and industrious people- receives so many visitors.

And this city, specifically, so well known through the writings of poets and writers, now appears renewed and dynamic, inviting people to get to know it.

Sir, may I congratulate you on your recent election as Lord Mayor in a city marked by traditions of such long-standing and promising prospects for the future.

I have come here, as President of Chile, a few months after the opening of the first resident Embassy of Chile in Dublin.

Our goal is to strengthen the links between both our countries. Ireland is a noteworthy actor in the process of globalisation and we aspire to become one too.

By inaugurating this resident Embassy we are settling an account with our own history.

Ambrosio O'Higgins, like W.B. Yeats' mother, was born in Sligo. He had a son in Chile whom he christened Bernardo.

And the main avenue that runs through Santiago, our capital city, where the Government Palace is located, where the main buildings of the country's main universities, the National Library and other historical buildings are situated, is called Alameda del Libertador Bernardo O'Higgins.

Because this man of Irish descent was one of the builders of Chile's independence following the tradition of freedom that has always inspired this island.

And since we are talking of countries that stand out for cultivating poetry and literature, I must mention Seamus Heaney, one of your great poets, who has no doubts about the real and positive effects of poetry in the world.

Probably, says Heaney, no exact answers can be found on the contribution made by one poet or another, on whether Brecht or Neruda helped the poor, or on the degree to which Allen Ginsberg and the beat generation changed the atmosphere of culture in the United States. However, it is certain that something real and effective happens through words that transmute, that interpret, that provide answers.

And the positive side of all this is the contribution made by poets to creating civilization. Beyond the pain, the wretchedness, the urgencies that make us seek the development of our peoples, lies the urgency of elevating the soul of humanity.

That is where our poets meet and that is where we want to meet also.

Thank you very much.