

Sergio Bitar

President, Fundacion por la Democracia



• **Sergio Bitar** is a leading Chilean politician. An engineer and economist, at present he is devoted to elaborating proposals for the future of Chile. He is president of Fundacion por la Democracia and a senior nonresident fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue. He heads, together with prof Abraham Lowenthal, a project of IDEA (Institute for democracy and electoral assistance) on transitions to democracy, interviewing ten world leaders. He is president and founder of Corporacion Museo del Salitre in charge of old nitrate facilities in the North of Chile, as Minister of Education, he requested and obtained the nomination of these facilities as a UNESCO Industrial heritage Site in 2005. He has an extensive political experience, has been Minister of Mining, Education and Public Works, under three different governments, a Senator, president of the Party Pro Democracy (PPD), member of the coalition which governed Chile during the last two decades, 1990-2010.

• **Minister of Public Works** (2008-2010). His main achievement was an increased investment in infrastructure, reaching the highest level in 2010, and a record in new biddings for investments through public- private partnerships (concessions) in 2009; the approval of a new law regulating such concessions in 2010, and a plan for infrastructure: Chile 2020. Infraestructura para el Desarrollo. (See www.mop.cl). His ministry actively participated in a special program to generate employment during the global financial crisis of 2008-9. He also had to face the challenges caused by the major earthquake that hit Chile on February 27, 2010 and, in a short span of 14 days, ensure complete connectivity by land, sea and air throughout the country.

• **President of the Party pro Democracy** (2006- 2008). Elected for a third term with 60% of the vote. He served two previous mandates as president of the party during 1992-1994 and 1997-2000. Spokesman for the government coalition in 1998 and 1999. Awarded with

the “Democratic Merit” medal by the Concertación (April 2000). Head of the PPD parliamentary campaign (2001).

- **Coordinator for Michelle Bachelet’s presidential campaign** (second round of voting, Dec. 2005, Jan. 2006).
- **Minister of Education** and President of the Chilean National Commission of UNESCO. (2003-2005). His priorities were the quality of education and a reform in higher education in order to for increase coverage for low-income students and foster quality. In 2003 he obtained the approval of a major constitutional amendment enforcing mandatory and free secondary education. Congress also approved a bill mandating teacher’s evaluation in all public schools. Minister Bitar launched and won the approval of two relevant laws for higher education, one providing government loan guarantee for students and another mandating accreditation of universities. He also initiated a new program to improve English language teaching, and for these efforts received the “Advocacy Award”, conferred by TESOL (Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages), in Tampa, Florida, in March of 2006.
- **Senator** (1994-2002) He was a member of the Finance, Foreign Affairs, Economics and Mining Committees. Leading senator in promoting the “Leyes Arica” (regional development) and implementing an e-legislation program in the Senate for citizen’s participation. President of the Budget Sub Committee for the Armed Forces (2000 and 2001). He also created a nonprofit organization (Corporación Museo del Salitre) to protect and restore the last nitrate mining facilities in the Atacama desert. Later, as Minister of Education, he requested and obtained the nomination of these facilities as a UNESCO Industrial Heritage Site in 2005.
- **Minister of Mining** during the Allende Administration (1973). Economic advisor to the President (1971-1972). Director of Industrial Planning, Corporación de Fomento de la Producción (1968-1970).
- **He was detained after the military coup** (Sept. 1973), imprisoned in a concentration camp on Dawson Island and then forced to exile (1974-1984). He lived in Venezuela and the United States.

OTHER PUBLIC ACTIVITIES:

- **President** Fundación por la Democracia.

- *President of the Corporation Museo del Salitre (aimed at restoring the old nitrate mining camps in northern Chile, where he was elected Senator).*
- *Member of the Board Instituto de Ingenieros de Chile.*
- *Member of the Inter-American Dialogue (Washington DC).*
- *Vice-President Fundación Paz Ciudadana (citizen´s security).*
- *Board member of the Fundacion País Digital (for the promotion of ICT).*
- *Member of the board PREAL (educational reform in Latin America).*
- *Ambassador on special mission on behalf of the Chilean Senate to request support for the election of a Chilean senator as President of the World Parliamentary Union (2002).*
- *Founder and vice-president of the newspaper Fortín Mapocho (opposition newspaper during the Pinochet military regime) and board member of several Chilean magazines (1986-1992).*

ACADEMICS:

- *Former Member of the Board (2002), Universidad de Santiago.*
- *Member of the Board Universidad Mayor (2010-2011)*
- *Visiting Fellow Inter American Dialogue (2011)*
- *Founder and president of the Latin American Center for International Economics and Politics (CLEPI) Santiago (1987-1993).*
- *Visiting Fellow Harvard Institute for International Development (1975-1978) and The Wilson International Center for Scholars, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC (1982-1983).*
- *Consultant for the UN's ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, UN) (1985) and SELA (Sistema Económico Latinoamericano) (1979-1981).*
- *Full professor School of Engineering (1965) and Director Department of Industries (1966-1968) Universidad de Chile.*
- *Awarded "Outstanding Engineer", Department of Industry, Universidad de Chile, 2004.*

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

- *President of an industrial company in Caracas, Venezuela (1976-1986) and member of the board of other companies in Chile (1987-1993).*

- Chosen for the “Outstanding Entrepreneur” Award by Corpopena, Venezuela, 1978.

STUDIES

- Degree in Civil Engineering, Universidad de Chile (1963) received the Marcos Orrego award for most outstanding student, Instituto de Ingenieros, 1965.
- Graduate studies in Economics at the Centre d’Etudes de Programmes Economiques, Paris (Diplome, 1965) and at Harvard University (Master’s Degree in Public Administration, 1971).
- Secondary education at the Instituto Nacional (1951-1957).
- Award in recognition for outstanding “Public Service” (Centro ex Alumnos Instituto Nacional, 2001).

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING BOOKS: [\(View and download books\)](#)

- **Chile Bolivia Peru, Un Futuro Comun, El norte de Chile en el sigloXXI**, Editorial Aguilar, Santiago, Octubre 2011.
- **Chile Mas Allá del Bicentenario**, Editorial Planeta, Santiago, 2009.
- **Cita con la Historia**, Interview with Patricia Arancibia C, Editorial Biblioteca Americana, Santiago, 2006
- **Educación Nuestra Riqueza, Chile Educa para el siglo XXI** , Editorial El Mercurio-Aguilar, Santiago, 2005
- **Isla 10**, Pehuén Editores Ltda., Santiago, Chile, eleven editions between 1988 and 2009.
- **Chile 1970.-1973**, Editorial Pehuén, Chile, 1996 and 2001, also published as **Transicion, Socialismo y Democracia. La Experiencia Chilena**, Editorial Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1978, **Transição, Socialismo e Democracia**, Paz e Terra, Rio de Janeiro, 1981 (“the best book written on the Chilean experience” according to Brazilian economist Celso Furtado) and **Chile Experiments on Democracy**, Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Pittsburg, USA, 1985.
- **Chile para Todos**, Editorial Planeta, Santiago, 1988
- **Venezuela, The Industrial Challenge**, University Press of America, 1990, also published as **El Desafío Industrial de Venezuela**, Editorial Pomaire, Buenos Aires, 1983.

- *Crisis Financiera e Industrial en América Latina*, Grupo Editor Latinoamericano. Buenos Aires, 1988.
- *Política Económica de Estados Unidos en América Latina*, Documentos de la Administración Reagan, Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, Buenos Aires, 1984.
- *La caída de Allende y la Huelga de El Teniente*, with C Pizarro, Ediciones del Ornitorrinco, Santiago, 1986
- *Cambiar la Vida*, with E Edwards and C Ominami, Editorial Melquiades, Santiago, 1888
- *Corporaciones Multinacionales y Autonomía Nacional*, Monte Ávila editores, Caracas, Venezuela, 1976

AUTHOR OF RECENT ARTICLES: [\(View and download articles\)](#)

- “Estados Unidos y América Latina de Cara al 2020” Bildner Center New York City University, may 2011.
- *¿Paralelismos entre Mubarak y Pinochet?*, El País, España, 5 may 2011
- “Infrastructure and development” in *Toward the Consolidation of the G20*, C Bradford and W Lim, editors, Korea development institute, 2010.
- “Chile 2020: La Infraestructura para la Próxima Década” in *Revista Vial*, Sept-Oct 2009, Buenos Aires, pages 94-97
- *South America: Disintegration or Reintegration*” in *Vision From Finis Terrae*, Chilean Voices in the United States, Inter-American Dialogue, Washington, DC, 2008
- “Compras militares y Ley del Cobre” en *Compras Militares y Transparencias. Debate Público*, Cámara de Diputados, Comisión de Defensa Nacional, Chile ; Oct 2006, pages 93-96.
- “¿Cuál es la Educación que Chile necesita?” in *Chile Supera la Encrucijada*, Instituto de Ingenieros, Editorial Universidad de Concepción, Chile, 2005.
- *Chile: Característica e Desafios do Sistema de Educacao Superior*, in *Universidades no Mundo*, Vol. 2, Universidade de Brasilia, 2004, pages 159 -182.
- *Desafíos de la Educación en Chile y lecciones de los Países del Asia Pacifico*”. Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Escuela de Gobierno, Santiago, Chile, Octubre 2004.
- “ Reformas Institucionales para el Crecimiento de América Latina” CEPAL Seminar, Santiago, May 2002.

- *”Infraestructura e Integración en América Latina”*, ALADI, Montevideo, August 2002.