

Transcript of press conference given by Silo in Hotel Uspallata, May 4, 1999

S : We took advantage of a new opportunity to get together.

Even though we haven't evaluated these thirty years. We're thinking of doing so in the month of July. We don't know what will happen, but we need to connect with the people in the different countries in an important meeting which will take place in Madrid, in early July this year, and in that meeting we will have to listen a lot, to what they tell us, what they suggest to us, because people will be arriving there with a great deal of information on what has been happening in these years.

What has been happening in Asia, in Europe, in Latin America, in Africa which is a great hope for us and where the movement is growing very quickly, but we don't know the details.

What will happen...we have to evaluate all this.

P : Can you tell us anything in advance?

S : We have a lot of doubts about our procedures and the form we use to move in the environment. I believe we've committed numerous errors and we have to reformulate things.

Therefore what will be most important will be, first of all:

The information that people take to that meeting from the different continents and, second: the assessments that the people will make regarding the form that we have used for moving and, if this is the case, how we will have to do things in front of this new world situation that is before us.

Not just in relation to us, but the world situation, with everything having to do in general with the institutions, countries, economic systems. Therefore, on one hand information, and on the other, we'll see what we shall do Whether it would be worth it to do something, or not.

P : Is there a project directly related to Argentina, without any need to connect her to other countries?

S : Yes. In Argentina there is a political project. I can say right now that on the 14th of this month, in other words within 10 days, we're right at the door, we are thinking of filling up Plaza de Mayo - something that's just a bit unusual for a small party like the Humanist Party. Yes, we are thinking of gathering more people together than Governor Duhalde did.

Yes, so this isn't simple bravado, it is merely the reflection of a phenomenon that is real, that has not been properly measured and taken into consideration.

And now we'll see whether we can do it, or whether it'll be a big flop. But I think it's worth a try. In 10 more days we'll find out. The presidential candidate is with us here, Lía Mendez, who will speak at the event, and the people of the party have asked me to say a few words as well. And so we will be the only two speakers and we'll have to say whatever there is to say to the government, what must be said to the opposition, which we consider is not an authentic opposition. And of course it won't be as friendly an affair as the event here that we've held among our friends, something using very simple language, very cordial. We won't be so pleasant because there are many reasons for protest and many things that must be said, many things to propose. I won't make the most important proposals because I really don't have much political ability. Surely they will be made by Dra. L. Mendez, she will present the ideas of the Humanist Party, the proposals we demand for the next elections based on the Orange Book, which is the party's book which contains our analysis of the problems of the national reality And so in answer to your question, yes, there will be proposals specific for the Argentine situation and we will try to launch them in a rally in the next 10 days.

P : There are rumors that you could be a candidate, is this true?

S : No, no, it isn't true. It isn't true because that was already discussed. There were people who said it would be interesting, but to do that one has to have the long nails of a flamenco guitarist. (Laughter) In other countries, especially in Europe, a great distinction is made between what would be the practical politician and the political philosopher or political thinker.

In that case, my situation is not that of a practical politician. If one can make a contribution in terms of general ideas, that's fine. I believe that that is where I move, more or less, but as for the practical side, we have excellent candidates, we have very vigorous people who can do much better than I.

And so that isn't going to be possible (for Silo to be a candidate - T.N.).

P : What is the relationship between the Humanist community, which was born in the 70s, and the current political project? Because to start out as a sect that was more concerned with religiousness, self-knowledge, the discovery of certain human facets in each individual, and then to get into politics seems a bit off the wall, they are contradictory projects. S : Yes, well, it would be good to break that question down into several parts.

The Humanist Movement, which is what has originated the Community for Human Development, has also given origin to the political party, which is what has given origin to numerous social, grassroots and cultural organizations. That movement is one and the same, which expresses itself in different ways.

As for whether the movement, in its form as the Community for Human Development, was a sect, no - it was not and is not a sect.

If it were a sect, there wouldn't be any problem either, well and good, I wouldn't have any problem with saying, "This is a sect and whoever wants to participate, let them come and take part in the sect."

No, that isn't the problem. The problem is the poor information that some people might have. People don't make too many distinctions in this regard, people don't know that Christianity is divided into the Protestant sect and the Catholic sect. They don't know that Islam is divided into the Shiite sect, the Jariya sect and the Orthodox (Sunnite) sect. They don't know that the Buddhists are divided into the Mahayana and the Hinayana sects. The word is rather an epithet that is used to denigrate. First they say terrible things about sects, and then they say "You have a sect." In reality people are very badly informed in these areas.

But aside from this, we aren't much concerned with the issue. It's simply that people should be better informed because public opinion should not be manipulated in that way, and people ought to know what the issues are really all about. Correct?

However, that is one aspect of the question. The issue of the sect and the issue of whether the Community is off the wall when it gets into political parties, and so on. In reality it isn't so farfetched, rather they are very different expressions of this movement.

The movement - and we'll explain it once more - considers human reality and social reality as very complex. There are different expressions. We are of the opinion that the expression of a political party is simply very small, it is very limited. Human beings have other needs which are not just political.

In decades past, opinion was divided between those who thought of internal things, and those who thought of external things. Then the political people couldn't even look at themselves in the mirror because that was being interiorist. People who talked about spiritual things and all that didn't want to have anything to do with politics because that was synonymous to alteration, alienation etc.

Today everything has changed, the traditional schemes have fallen and we are continuing in the same old ways.

The human being is a complex reality, the human being has a personal existence, an interpersonal existence, cultural expressions, and that is what the movement aims to do - to express itself in all fields. And if there were religious needs then it would also express itself in the religious field. Why not, we aren't afraid of that, the censorship that was active up to just recently has ended. We aren't afraid of that kind of censure, that someone might say: "You are religious, you are political..." We are what we have the need to be and we try to carry it forward. Sometimes we'll make mistakes of methodology, this is true, but we are very frank in stating our proposals.

P : Silo, the humanist ideas are really unobjectionable. Why do you believe that in the world population they have caught on so little, both at the world and the local level?

S : That is the nucleus of our questions, certainly. How is it that it hasn't developed as we intended it to. Probably we've committed errors of methodology. The proposal is, as you say, quite unobjectionable. Correct? And yet it hasn't had the vigor, the force...perhaps we personally have not had the sufficient quality to be able to explain things.

This is the theme of our review in the month of July, precisely this.

P : What is your vision of the country in these last 30 years?

S : Of the country, well...of course, it's better from the point of view that today they don't kill you on the street, or make you disappear just like that. Actually, in any case there are still a few disappearances, but, well, let's leave it at that.

But the country has ceased to be a country as such. Of course people will argue that globalization, etc....That therefore countries are not necessary. Alright, okay, but precisely it has stopped being a country, it has ceased to manage its natural resources, it has ceased to administer its companies. The country is in a state of total defenselessness. In exchange for what... They told us that we were headed toward abundance, they said the humble classes were going to be just peachy keen. It hasn't happened. This thing continues to deteriorate and it is headed for disaster. And so we believe that we have to talk about this issue a lot. We have to talk about convertibility of the currency, which we oppose. We have to discuss, well...a lot of things still.

But if the question is, as you point out, this country in the last 30 years, the answer is that the general situation of all the Latin American countries is deteriorating.

P : NATO announced that it is prepared to intervene in any part of the world where they believe it is necessary. What would humanism do to counter this formidable war machinery which seems to have transformed itself into the police force of the world?

S : Of course, for now it is a military alliance. That military alliance has superimposed itself over such organisms as the United Nations. There is a general assembly, a security council. If we are to settle international questions, we must go through the UN. K. Anam has said this, the Russians have said it, and the representatives of different countries. Here we have a military alliance that has imposed itself on international organizations.

What do they want? To make the UN disappear? This is a disaster. If a military alliance is going to decide what happens in other countries, it will make the countries disappear, it's the end of Serbia's sovereignty, the end of the sovereignty of the Balkans. A military alliance directly intervenes.

They will say, but what about the genocide? That is another discussion. The discussion of Milosevic is a totally different one. That issue has to be dealt with through the corresponding organization, which is the UN and not a military alliance.

What does a military alliance have to say about juridical questions and human rights? Nothing less than a military alliance.

Things are in a bad way.

But your question is: What would Humanism do? Same as always. Humanism can't do a thing. We are in a situation...that is quite deficient as far as the possibility of making our contribution goes. Unfortunately we cannot do anything, except voice a small protest to a person who asks us a question.

But there is nothing we can do, unfortunately. This is disastrous, we are headed for trouble. They should listen to Kissinger, who is very knowledgeable about the state of international disorder. To that same Kissinger, who has, besides, tremendous experience, they should listen to him when he says, "The events in the Balkans, those who are taking part in it seem to have learned nothing from history."

And he explained very clearly that the situation in the Balkans took place after the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Artificial divisions were made between the countries. Yugoslavia appeared, the Serbs, the Croats, the Montenegrines, the Macedonians, the Albanian minorities and all the rest.

All that was drawn with artificial lines. Things that are drawn up in the Foreign Office or in other offices, just as they did in Africa, as they have done at other times in Latin America, to fix the situation that developed in the period following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Many decades have passed and now, since they never solved that situation, a world war happened, a second world war came, Tito's government, which of course applied a coat of varnish to the thing, but the real problems continued to exist.

And now the only solution that occurs to them is sweeping away history, assaulting Yugoslavia with a military alliance.

It's monstrous.

Well, we could talk long about this, but at least they should listen to Kissinger, at the very least.

P : Silo, what is your life like today, what do you do?

S : I lead a quiet life all in all. I have a few properties. The agricultural land that I had with my wife has been sold. What else?...We're building a parking lot (laughter)...it's okay, it's okay.

P . In other words you have your own means?

S : I wouldn't put it that way exactly, but life is quiet, some books are being published as well. I'm doing alright.

P : Silo, you were asked 30 years ago if you were thinking of founding a movement, on May 4, 1969, and you answered that your task was a personal one, and that to create a movement or a church or whatever would be a new form of violence. What happened? Did you change your point of view later on?

S : I don't remember the context of that question very well. It would be necessary to see in what general terms it was formulated and what my answer was exactly. But I don't think that a movement based on non-violence would be a form of violence. Perhaps if one doesn't take that basis into account, then any movement would be converted into a form of violence. But precisely the originality of this is that this movement has to support itself on non-violence, to be such.

P : You've talked about the world process that has been developing these last few years. I would be interested in knowing what role is played, in that world process, by the press.

S : I believe that the press (Gap follows in the recording)... if I were to work with the press, I would prefer the people who don't have popular roots, who don't have structures, who don't have power or influence over the people; rather I would choose mediatory candidates, that I would choose, logically.

P : Do believe, as does Sercheto (?) that the press, the communications media transmit the ideology of the dominant class? S : If I believe as who?

P : Sercheto (?)

S : I haven't kept up with him.

But the issue is not so clear cut. I formulate a more organological proposal rather than a class-based one. I believe we are dealing with structures, who want this or who want that, structures in a struggle among themselves in order to attain a larger and larger parcel of power. I believe this, rather than the reading of the dominant or non-dominant ideologies. It doesn't seem to me that things are that way. On the other hand we must distinguish between the journalistic business, which is a business like any other, and the human material, the people who work in the journalistic business.

Journalists have a real existence, they are persons, they are citizens, they have their opinions and when they can, of course, they also articulate their opinions.

And so in a large company, which perhaps has very precise economic interests, the journalists nevertheless have other kinds of interests. The matter is a complex one.

But in any case I don't believe that everything is limited to an issue of a dominant class. I believe it is a structure that has to develop itself, the way any structure must, and there is nothing wrong with that. Journalism, also as a structure, must develop, and if it does not, it succumbs.

P : How do you relate with power?

S : With power? Who? Me? I personally don't relate with power, in fact I have very few relations with the representatives of power. I would like to represent myself favorably before the press, because the press shapes public opinion.

P : Is it true that you were very close to Perón?

S : No, no that is not true. I have read in some newspapers in the country and I have also read it elsewhere in Europe. Particularly a certain Swiss newspaper that printed that I had had a personal friendship with Perón. On the other hand, it doesn't seem all that serious to me. If such a friendship had existed I would say yes, yes, I was a good friend of Perón's, except that I never met him, and so it isn't possible.

P : Silo, what you do believe is the place or will be the place of the Humanist Party, in a country like Argentina, so prone to polarization?

S : That is a problem. The two important parties will precisely try to polarize things. The Humanist Party, as far as it is able, will try to demonstrate that they (The two parties - T.N.) are one and the same thing. And we shall see what the left does in its state of atomization. We convoke them continually to participate.

The left insists on our forming a front with them. We already formed a front in the past. That's what the FRAL came out of, correct? And the thing didn't continue and well...the fragmentation is still there. Well...we'll invite them, even if just to Plaza de Mayo. We'll see if all the leftist groups come and we get to the elections with something more substantial.

But I have the impression that fronts such as those we have known in the past, fronts with the left, will not take shape. And the Humanist Party will not join fronts. What we are asking the people of the left is that, without losing their identity, they participate, that they figure as candidates in the lists of the Humanist Party.

You belong to the Communist Party...very good, sign up in the lists of the Humanist Party, don't renounce your ideology. And you are from another leftist party... participate. Some are considering the possibility. Of being independent candidates of the Humanist Party. We shall see how it all turns out.

But it doesn't seem to me that forming fronts will work out well.

P : What was the reason for holding community dinners in the country, which began in Tucumán last year?

S : Many dinners were held, Dra. Lía Mendez went to almost all of them. And people took part very well in different parts of the country and we noted that there was strong support from the people. I believe that the Party made great progress because it communicated one-to-one with the people, hand to hand, heart to

heart. In the more modest neighborhoods, in the places where the people are most disinherited. Dinners were held everywhere, in the name of brotherhood.

I believe that yes, much was gained, but from Tucumán to Tierra del Fuego. I took part in some of them which were, frankly, formidable.

P : What calls one's attention and seems to me notable and different is that in general the events of Humanism have more to do with the social base than with the relationships of power and the hierarchies. Why is this?

S : I don't know. It's the direction that has always been taken. It goes in that direction.

And with the hierarchies, the Humanist Party is doing something wrong because it doesn't succeed in reaching understanding with them.

I don't know, it always goes toward the base and everything always turns out well with the base. In the neighborhoods. In the community dinners. In the encounters with the independent labor union movement, which isn't hooked up to any sphere of power. It always goes well. As soon as the contacts and relations begin with the hierarchies of other parties, everything ends very badly.

It could be a lack of talent, it might very well be...

P : As for the lack of interest in taking up certain practices.... (Unclear question)

S : Well, I would say that that's it. In reality the Humanists don't want to have anything to do with other practices. But let's not put it as though it were a matter of Humanism's superiority, let's say it is a case of Humanism's inferiority. Humanism has no capacity to relate with hierarchies, let's say.... (Laughter).

P : And this has led to the practice (?) of the vertical structure (Question is not clearly audible).

S : The movement has much of verticalism in it and it isn't frightened by that either. It has a lot of vertical things. Of course, the verticality is supported by a lot of consensus. The people themselves are the ones who say, alright...let's do this or that. People have no problem with it.

P : What does "Silo" mean?

S : When I was a gymnast, it meant thin, long, skinny. Then nuclear missiles came along and the image became rather unattractive. But that's it, a silo, a storage building.

But it's also a pseudonym, basically it's a pseudonym.

P : What for, how did it start, who gave it to you?

S : The nickname was born in the club of Gymnastics and Fencing. With several fellow students and a gym professor I had, Gustav Neuman, and they gave me that nickname, that name.

But pseudonyms are a story that exists everywhere. Who doesn't know about Neruda, which is a great pseudonym but a pseudonym no less, or Alfarrero in Argentina?

Not to mention the golden age of the Socialists in the field of real Socialism. Lenin - is that a name? No, it's a pseudonym. Trotsky, Stalin, they're all pseudonyms.

There was a time when pseudonyms were very common and they are still used often in literature and other fields.

Well, one more pseudonym won't hurt anybody.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, thanks very much, really, my thanks.