



CHILE

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NEWS

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President Ricardo Lagos thanks citizens for supporting the governing coalition's candidates in the municipal elections. La Moneda Palace, October 31, 2004.

Popular endorsement

On Sunday, October 31, Chileans participated in a new electoral process: voters directly elected 345 mayors and 2,144 council members, in keeping with the provisions of Article 108 of the Constitution. The officials will serve for a period of four years and may run for reelection.

As is traditional in the country, the great majority of registered voters, approximately 85%, fulfilled their civic duty and showed up to vote. For the first time since 1990, mayors and council members were elected in separate lists.

The mayoral candidates belonging to the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia received 44.79% of the votes, while the leading opposition group, represented by the Alianza por Chile, was chosen by 38.65% of the electorate. In the election for council members, the Concertación raised the percentage to 47.91%, while the Alliance's share decreased to 37.66%.



The greatest surprise of the election came from the Juntos Podemos "Together We Can" coalition, which represents the Humanist and Communist parties along with several other small groupings of the left: it won 5.91% of the mayoral votes and 9.14% in the council races, a figure which considerably raises its political representation, translating into four elected mayors and 90 council members.

DID YOU KNOW?

★ Three hundred years have passed since the exploits of Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk, whose story inspired the well-known novel *Robinson Crusoe*. To celebrate the anniversary, Selkirk's home village of Lower Largo and the Chilean island named for the intrepid character have signed a partnership agreement, aimed at intensifying contact and carrying out cooperation and tourism projects in both places, thousands of kilometers apart but united by the same legendary history.

★ Arturo Prat Plaza in Copiapó, in the Third Region, was chosen by leading Chilean architects as the country's most beautiful town square. Founded in 1774, the plaza includes a central fountain as well as a marble statue honoring the region's miners. Yet perhaps its greatest treasures are the 84 *pimiento* trees planted in 1880, whose generous branches provide protection from the sun in an area where shade is a precious commodity.

Strengthening democracy

A historic agreement was reached by Chile's administration together with senators from all parts of the political spectrum to reform the country's 1980 Constitution, originally drafted and approved under the regime of General Augusto Pinochet. Although the Senate accepted a large part of the government's proposal, the administration remained unable to eliminate the binominal electoral system, described by President Ricardo Lagos as "aberrant and unjust."

However, under the agreement the system will be removed from the Constitution and included in the country's Organic Law of Popular Voting and Vote-Counting, which will help facilitate its reform in the future.

The reforms include the elimination of the designated and for life Senate seats starting in March 2006, ensuring that all future legislators will be elected by popular vote. They also reestablish the President's power to remove the commanders in chief of the Armed Forces and the general director of the Carabineros, as well as providing citizenship to children born abroad to Chilean parents. After an intense debate, the Senate agreed on



FACTS

Chile stands in 22nd place among the world's most competitive countries, according to the 2004 ranking prepared by the World Economic Forum. Ranked in first place within Latin America, the country rose six places with respect to its 2003 position, surpassing countries such as France, Ireland, South Africa, South Korea and Belgium.

In its index of perceived corruption, Transparency International ranked Chile in 20th place among 146 countries and first within Latin America. On a scale of 0 to 10 (representing increasing levels of honesty), Chile received an index of 7.4.

In its most vigorous recovery since 1988, the Chilean economy grew 7.4% in August compared to the same period in 2003. The expansion was driven by excellent performance in the industrial and mining sectors.



Chile's National Copper Corporation (Codelco) has placed a bond for 500 million dollars in the United States, at a historic rate that breaks all previous records set by Latin American companies and even governments: a spread of 95 base points over the ten-year U.S. Treasury bill.

Chilean investment abroad has reached its highest level within the past six years: between January and September, projects totaling 1.239 billion dollars were announced.

November 3 to reduce the presidential term of office from six to four years without the opportunity for reelection. This was one of the government's proposed reforms for which it was previously unable to gain consent from the Upper House.

Parallel to this, the Senate modified the nature of the National Security Council, making it an advisory body which can only be convened by the President of the Republic, the Senate or the Supreme Court.

The agreement — the most radical reform yet undertaken to the Constitution — fulfills a longstanding aspiration of the Concertación coalition administrations since the recovery of democracy in 1990. "It is a historic step and one of great transcendence: after long years of debate, we have achieved a part of that for which we have struggled for so long," noted the President.

Presidential tour

From October 11 to 15, President Lagos visited Romania, Turkey and Hungary in a working tour that culminated with his participation in the Sixth Progressive Leaders' Summit.

In Bucharest, he met with President Ion Iliescu, discussing the strengthening of relations between Chile and Romania which will take place after that country's entry into the European Union in 2007. Chile has been a strategic partner of the bloc since 2003.



The two Presidents signed an agreement to combat the spread of narcotics as well as another to eliminate the visa requirement for Chilean and Romanian citizens. President Lagos also met with Prime Minister Adrian Nastase and received an honorary doctoral degree from the University of Bucharest.

The Chilean President arrived in Turkey at an especially significant time for that country, after the European Commission recommended studying its eventual entry into the EU. The Chilean leader expressed his country's sentiments to Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer: "This not only signifies the arrival of a strong partner in the economic sphere, but also represents a contribution to cultural pluralism." The two Presidents signed a cultural, scientific and educational exchange protocol and discussed the possibility of negotiating a Free Trade Agreement. The University of Bilkent also honored President Lagos with an honorary doctorate.

In Hungary, the Chilean President participated in the Progressive Leaders' Summit, where he joined another ten Heads of State and Government in discussing appropriate policies to address current challenges in health care and education, as well as strategies for dealing with populations that are aging thanks to improved public health systems. The leaders also analyzed the political transition process in Haiti.



QUOTATIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT

"I would like to express my appreciation for the extraordinary support given by a clear majority to those who represent the ideas of this administration, of the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia. This endorsement provides new energy to continue with the task that lies ahead of us, to confront the problems that still remain, to work toward a future of progress and justice that will benefit everyone."

**After the municipal elections.
October 31, 2004**

"This is related to our deepest sense of what Chile is, the society we want to construct, the progress that we have made in these years. I am certain that the leaders of the coalition parties will be able to find ways to guarantee the continuity of what we have accomplished, first with Patricio Aylwin, then with Eduardo Frei, and now with those who stand before you."

**On the victory of the governing coalition's candidates in the municipal elections.
October 31, 2004**

"Our Latin American identity is intimately linked to that which Mexico signifies and that which it has given us, through its history, its culture and its literature. I believe that is a great honor to have Mexico as a guest."

**During the inauguration of the 24th International Book Fair in Santiago.
November 1, 2004**

"We fervently support the construction of a future of peace and cooperation between Chile and Bolivia. Economic, social and cultural integration, and the implementation of trade agreements are the keys to the future so that our populations can reach the levels of development and progress to which we all aspire."

**On the occasion of the centennial of the 1904 Treaty between Bolivia and Chile.
October 21, 2004**

Chile "is a well-organized country that is functioning well, with clear priorities: we want to grow and expand, but we also want to ensure that no one is left behind."

**On the 2005 budget bill.
October 7, 2004**

A Pastor of peace

During his life, the Archbishop Emeritus of Santiago, Cardinal Juan Francisco Fresno, provided examples of his great integrity, his profound convictions and his broad and insightful view of the difficult historical process experienced by Chile in the 1980s, during the military regime.

On October 17, after his death at age 90 from kidney failure, a multitudinous crowd bid farewell to him at a Mass in Santiago's Metropolitan Cathedral. His funeral was attended by government officials, headed by President Lagos and his wife, Luisa Durán; representatives from all political parties and the Army; family members, friends, and members of other religious creeds.

In his homily, the Archbishop of Santiago, Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz, emphasized that Cardinal Fresno struggled "steadfast against risks, incomprehension, and humiliation" to reconstruct the fabric of Chilean society, becoming a decisive figure in the reopening of dialogue "when all of the bridges of concordance were broken and a wave of vigorous street protest began, which was met with fear and harsh repression."

He was among the authors of the National Accord, signed in 1985 by representatives of various political currents seeking to recover civil liberties and hold free elections. Monsignor Fresno "was able to build bridges and unite many voices into a single voice. His initiative did not back down; it continued to encourage civil coexistence, dialogue, solidarity, respect, and the promotion of human rights," emphasized President Lagos, who decreed three days of national mourning in his honor.

Placing people at the center

Creating jobs, strengthening the public health care system, and advancing in the country's Educational Reform are the leading priorities of the 2005 budget bill recently sent by the administration to Congress. Significant resources will also be dedicated to programs aimed at eliminating poverty and further boosting the country's exports. This will all be accomplished within the framework of a structural surplus of 1% of the country's GDP.

The new budget bill is the most expansive in recent years, calling for a significant increase in public spending (6%) compared to the figure budgeted for 2004. Once again, social expenditures will account for nearly 70% of the total.

Job creation efforts will be focused on government-supported direct and indirect employment programs. These will finance a monthly average of



OVERHEARD

"Chilean workers are very well-trained, and Chilean know-how in many areas is higher than in the other Latin American countries, which makes Chile a productive and efficient country within the region, offering products and services of competitive quality."

Koo Ja-Kyung, head of South Korea's Commercial Office in Chile.
October 19, 2004

President Ricardo Lagos "is obsessed with administering the State with excellence, successfully implementing his model aimed at economic growth with social equilibrium, and completing the democratization of the country's institutions, through consensus and commitments that recover society's recognition of the value of dialogue and understanding above confrontation and coercion."

Claudio Fantini, *El silencio de los imponentes, La Voz del Interior*. Cordoba, Argentina,
October 17, 2004

"Chile is an interesting place, and within Latin America, it is like Switzerland in Europe. Chile is a very stable country in political terms, and its economy is growing, with good practices. Its market is small, but it has everything; it is stable, and we like this type of country."

Fernandino Beccalli, General Electric's President and General Manager for Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Canada. October 12, 2004

CHILEANS AROUND THE WORLD

Author Antonio Skármeta won Germany's Gustav Heinemann Peace Prize for Children's Literature for his book *La Redacción*. The work also received UNESCO's 2003 award for Children's and Young People's Literature in the Service of Tolerance.

After winning a Latin Grammy award in August, the group La Ley was selected once again as "Best Rock Artist" in the Latin MTV Awards competition in Miami.

Soprano Cristina Gallardo-Dômas received glowing reviews in the Spanish press after her performance in the Festival de Perelada, one of the country's most significant operatic events. Catalan tenor José Carreras chose her to interpret the work *Amor sin barreras* with him during the northern summer of 2006, at the Arena de Verona.

90,000 jobs, aiming for an average coverage of 125,000 positions by the third quarter of the year. If necessary, a Contingency Fund will also be activated to raise coverage to 180,000. This represents the greatest public effort in this area since 1999.

The bill also dedicates resources to the country's Health Reform, through the fulfillment of the AUGE program's health care guarantees for 25 medical conditions (see *ChileNews N°59*). Investment will be expanded in hospital infrastructure and in primary health care, which will enjoy the strongest growth within the sector.

The objective in the area of education is to increase participation in the Full School Day initiative to 1,732,000 students by the end of 2005. Also included are additional computational system resources for schools; 24,000 new places in preschool education for low-income children; and an increase in university scholarships and loans.

In addition, the Chile Solidarity program will intensify its work with the indigent population, to fulfill the goal of raising 225,000 families out of extreme poverty by the end of 2005, with new benefits in the area of employment and housing.



Promulgation of the Full School Day Law. October 28, 2004.

The desert blooms

Every so often, what is usually a dry and monotonous landscape becomes a vibrant carpet of flowers with diverse shapes and colors. Between September and November in some years, the phenomenon of the "flowering desert" carpets an extensive area of the Atacama, the world's driest desert, with living color.



The flowers include *garras de león* (lion's paws), *patas de guanaco* (guanaco feet), *orejas de zorro* (foxes' ears), *lirios del campo* (country irises), *azulillos*, *añañucas* and *Diegos de la noche* (which only open their petals in darkness). More than 200 species, most of them endemic to the region, brighten the landscape between the Second and Fourth Regions, some 450 to 1,100 kilometers north of Santiago.

The precipitation from a winter that is rainier than usual serves to awaken seeds and bulbs that have remained buried among the sand and rocks, sometimes for years. Hundreds of tourists, many from other countries, gather to view the spectacle of spring on its grandest scale and to witness this unique natural phenomenon.



Santa Teresa de Los Andes

Those who knew her remember her ready smile and her exuberant, inexhaustible vitality. There was a shining brilliance in the eyes of the young woman who would be Chile's first saint. Since October 6, the image of Santa Teresa de Los Andes, sculpted into a piece of Carrara marble six meters tall, occupies a vaulted niche on the exterior of Saint Peter's Basilica, in the heart of the Vatican.



The sculpture is the first of a Latin American saint to be located in this part of Saint Peter's, confirming Pope John Paul II's esteem for the young Carmelite nun and the Chilean people.

In a special gesture, the Holy

Father personally attended the blessing of *La Enamorada* (Woman in Love), the name given to the work by its creator, Juan Eduardo Fernández, a Chilean sculptor and grandnephew of Saint Teresa.

Foreign Minister Ignacio Walker, who headed the ceremony as the representative of President Ricardo Lagos, noted the immense joy and deep emotions evoked among the Chilean attendees by the privilege of sharing the Pope's presence. The minister was received in a private audience by the Supreme Pontiff, with whom he conversed about peace in the world and the Chilean government's position toward the armed conflicts that threaten it.

Juanita Fernández Solar, as Saint Teresa was called in ordinary life, was beatified by the Pope on April 3, 1987, before a massive crowd in Santiago. On March 21, 1993, she was canonized in a Vatican ceremony, with the Chilean faithful overflowing Saint Peter's Square.

Her short life was intense, happy and full. She loved every minute as if it were unique; she believed with fervor and without doubt; and she was conscious of every moment of every day. From an early age, she made her saintliness a daily challenge and faced her faults with the rigor of an adult.

When she was 14, she made the decision to dedicate herself to God as a nun. Five years later, she began her



novitiate under the name of Teresa de Jesús at the small convent of Espíritu Santo (Holy Spirit), in the village of Los Andes, 90 kilometers north of Santiago.

She died on April 12, 1920, at the age of 19. Her remains rest today in the sanctuary at Auco, near Los Andes, to which thousands of young people make the pilgrimage each year to profess their faith and affection.



AGENDA

- ★ November 1-14: 24th International Book Fair of Santiago. Estación Mapocho Cultural Center.
- ★ November 4 - 5: Participation of President Ricardo Lagos in the Rio Group Summit. Rio de Janeiro.
- ★ November 17-18: 16th APEC Ministerial Meeting. Santiago.
- ★ November 18-19: Official visit of the President of China, Hu Jintao. Santiago.
- ★ November 18-19: Official visit of the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Tran Duc Luong. Santiago.
- ★ November 18-19: Official visit of the President of the Republic of Korea, Roh Moo-Hyun. Santiago.
- ★ November 19: Official visit of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin. Santiago.
- ★ November 19-21: 12th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting. Santiago.
- ★ November 22: Official visit of the Prime Minister of Japan, Junichiro Koizumi. Santiago.

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