

JAN. 17, 2000

Chilean polls kick off in dead heat

SANTIAGO (AFP-Jiji) Voting got under way Sunday in Chile's runoff presidential elections between moderate leftist Ricardo Lagos, 61, and rightwinger Joaquin Lavin, 46.

The race was expected to be extremely tight, following the Dec. 12 first round in which Lagos took 47.9 percent of the vote, barely 0.4 percent more than his rival.

While Lagos is a longtime foe of former dictator Augusto Pinochet, 84, and Lavin supported his 17-year military rule, the two hopefuls stayed away from controversy over the fate of the retired general.

JAN. 17. 2000

Voting begins in presidential runoff in Chile

SANTIAGO (Reuters)—Polls opened for Chile's presidential runoff Sunday, with 8 million voters choosing between a soft-line socialist and a right-wing populist who was an advisor to former dictator Augusto Pinochet.

Ricardo Lagos, for the ruling center-left coalition, and Joaquin Lavin, the candidate of two right-wing parties, have been neck-and-neck in polls. The two ended in a virtual tie in Chile's first round election on Dec. 12.

The specter of Pinochet looms large in the ballot box battle because of the possibility that the retired general could return home from Britain as early as this week after a 15-month battle to avoid extradition to Spain to face torture charges.

The latest twist on the fate of Pinochet, 84, who ruled Chile with an iron fist for 17 years after ousting socialist president Salvador Allende in a bloody 1973 coup, has spiced up the race.

Victory for Lagos, a 61-year-old former public works minister, would make him the first socialist leader since Allende.

Triumph for 46-year-old Lavin, a former mayor of an upscale district of Santiago, would give Chile its first conservative leader since Pinochet stepped down in 1990 and its first elected right-winger since 1958.

"This election is important to continue democracy or return practically to the dictatorship. Lavin is backed to the hilt by people who were actively involved in the dictatorship," said Carlos Irquieta, a Lagos supporter.

"Lagos guarantees democracy. All the power would be on the right (if Lavin were to win)," the 26-year-old lawyer said.

JAN. 17, 2000

PORTADA

SOCIALIST LAGOS WINS CHILE POLL

AFP-Jiji

SANTIAGO—Moderate leftist Ricardo Lagos, 61, a longtime foe of ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet, is set to become Chile's next president, after defeating his right-wing rival in Sunday's runoff elections.

When he starts his six-year term in March, Lagos will become the first leftist president to govern Chile since socialist Salvador Allende died in the coup that brought Gen. Pinochet to power in 1973.

He will also lead the third consecutive government of the center-left Concertacion alliance since the end of military dictatorship in 1990.

Lagos garnered 51.32 percent of the vote, giving him a 2.64 point lead over Joaquin Lavín, who got 48.68 percent, according to results announced after almost 98 percent of the ballots were counted.

Under the Chilean voting system, blank and spoiled votes are not taken into account.

As soon as the outcome was announced, tens of thousands of people took to the streets,

honking horns and waving banners to cheer the victory of the man seen as a key figure in Chile's return to democracy after a 17-year military dictatorship that has been blamed for more than 3,000 deaths and many more cases of torture and arbitrary arrests.

Lagos supporters heaved a sigh of relief at the outcome of the run-off vote that was far from a foregone conclusion following the Dec. 12 first round in which Lagos only had a 0.4 percentage point lead over his rival.

A US-educated economist, Lagos had campaigned on a similar platform as his rival, concentrating on promises of economic and social improvements at a time when the South American country is experiencing its first recession in 20 years.

He promised to create new jobs, improve education, and provide better health care access.

And, like Lavín, he stayed away from controversy over the fate of Pinochet, 84.



REUTERS

Ricardo Lagos and his wife Luisa acknowledge supporters in Santiago on Sunday.

JAN. 18, 2000

PORTADA

Victory for Chile's Lagos hailed as start of 'new era'

European leaders go beyond protocol to welcome the first return of a socialist to power in Chile since 1973.

Reuters

BUENOS AIRES—Left-leaning European and Latin American leaders Monday hailed socialist Ricardo Lagos victory in Chile's presidential vote as the dawn of a "new era" for a land long overshadowed by ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet.

European fellow travelers

like France's Lionel Jospin, Italy's Massimo D'Alema and Germany's Gerhard Schroeder all went beyond pure protocol to congratulate Lagos, a dissident turned moderate leftist, for his hard-fought victory Sunday.

And Latin America's populist star of the moment, Venezuelan coup leader turned president, Hugo Chavez, celebrated the

first return of a socialist to Chile's presidential palace since Pinochet ousted elected leader Salvador Allende in 1973.

"A socialist with progressive vision is returning to the Moneda palace. This is the way, the way to fight for welfare and humanity and to put the past behind us, in reality and not just chronologically," said Chavez at a ceremony.

Lagos, 61, an economist and lawyer who once challenged Pinochet live on television while he was still in power, won a close contest Sunday

against right-winger and one-time Pinochet supporter Joaquin Lavín.

Lagos has promised more emphasis on housing, education and health for Chile's successful free-market economy—similar to what Argentina's new center-left President Fernando de la Rúa has promised after 10 years of free-market reform there.

"This new era beginning in Chile is crucial for relations between our two countries," a spokeswoman quoted De la Rúa as telling Lagos after his

win Sunday.

Lagos and De la Rúa are the Latin American proponents of the New Left espoused in Europe by Schroeder and Britain's Tony Blair. All of them are members of the Socialist International with Jospin and D'Alema.

French Prime Minister Jospin spoke of "personal happiness" shared by other French people "old enough to have expressed their solidarity with Chile through the dark years." He looked forward to "a new era full of hope for the Chilean

people but not free of hurdles and tension."

D'Alema foresaw "the beginning of an important phase of success and development for Chilean democracy and the entire region" and Schroeder told Lagos: "You personally represent a modern Chile, in which the need to adapt to global changes goes hand in hand with protecting human values and maintaining a fair society."

Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was the first foreign leader to salute Lagos.

JAN. 18, 2000

LAGOS VOWS TO FULFILL CAMPAIGN PLEDGES

Next Chilean president pushes for unity

SANTIAGO (AP) Fresh from his narrow election victory, President-elect Ricardo Lagos on Monday vowed to fulfill his campaign promises and stressed his appeal for national unity to tackle Chile's problems.

Lagos is the first socialist president elected since Salvador Allende, who was toppled in 1973 by Gen. Augusto Pinochet. Lagos was one of the leading opponents of the Pinochet regime.

But while Allende appears as a distant figure of the past, Pinochet's shadow looms close to Lagos.

Visiting a rehabilitation center for young drug addicts, Lagos said he will "work with all sectors," including opponents, to face problems as Chile emerges from its deepest recession in more than 15 years, with unemployment at more than 9 percent.

"The electoral battle ended, there is now room for everybody in our efforts," he said.

He said his "main priority will be creating jobs with more dignity for Chileans." He predicted the economy will grow by 6 percent this year, compared with zero growth in 1999.

Joaquin Lavín, the rightist rival Lagos narrowly defeated Sunday in a runoff vote, said he is prepared to help. "I wish him the greatest success. He can always count on me for help."

The president-elect said



SUPPORTERS GREET CHILE'S PRESIDENT-ELECT Ricardo Lagos after he visited youths at a rehabilitation center for drug addicts in Santiago on Monday. Lagos was the first socialist president to be elected since Salvador Allende, who was overthrown in a 1973 coup. AP PHOTO

Lavín should ask his followers in Congress to help pass Lagos' proposals.

"I told Lavín that since during the campaign we proposed similar solutions for many problems, we should now advance toward quickly approving proposals in Congress."

Francisco de la Maza, who directed Lagos' campaign, made it clear negotiations will be necessary to get right-

wing legislators to pass Lagos' proposals.

His center-left coalition, known as Concertación, holds a majority in the lower legislative house, but the right controls the Senate. The next congressional elections will be in December 2001.

The coalition, made up of two socialist groups and the Christian Democratic Party of incumbent President Eduardo Frei, has governed

since the end of the Pinochet regime in 1990.

Lagos received 51.3 percent of the 7.3 million votes cast Sunday. Lavín had 48.9 percent.

One of Lagos' key proposals — a bill giving workers more rights, especially greater job stability — is firmly opposed by Lavín and his followers, including those heading private businesses.

Lagos' election win spells trouble for Pinochet

SANTIAGO (Reuters) Socialist Ricardo Lagos' victory in presidential polls makes it more likely that Augusto Pinochet will be tried in Chile for abuses in his 17-year dictatorship, analysts said Monday.

Lagos' stated desire for the Chilean courts to begin functioning effectively makes the prosecution of the retired general on home soil more likely, although Lagos could not force the judiciary because it functions independently from the government, they added.

Pinochet, 84, who ran this South American nation with an iron fist between 1973 and 1990, could be on a plane back home from Britain this week if a bid to extradite him to Spain to face torture charges collapses.

But in Chile, a crusading judge is investigating 50 law-

suits filed against the retired general. If any evolves into a concrete charge, it would mean Pinochet could be forced to go to trial.

Lagos, 61, was one of Pinochet's most valiant opponents during the dictatorship and once challenged Pinochet openly on live TV while the general was still in power. Lagos won Sunday's presidential race over one of Pinochet's ex-advisers by a comfortable margin.

In his victory speech Sunday night, Lagos spoke of equality for all in terms of law and justice. In response, the crowd of 60,000 broke into an impromptu and repeated chant of "Put Pinochet on trial."

Lagos responded by saying, "In my government, trials will be undertaken by the courts, and I will make the

courts be respected."

His supporters gave the remark subdued applause; most leftist and radical members of his ruling coalition would like to see Pinochet behind bars and blame him for the more than 3,000 people who died or disappeared under his dictatorship.

Lagos' comments likely herald a new push to invigorate Chile's justice system, which was subjugated under Pinochet and is still seen as the least functional of Chile's democratic institutions.

It is not uncommon for Chile's wealthy to buy favorable legal rulings, and Chile's still-powerful military maintains that military courts supersede civil tribunals.

Chilean courts in President Eduardo Frei's term have begun working more independently, and Judge Juan Guz-

man's willingness to investigate lawsuits filed against Pinochet is evidence of that.

Lagos is from the leftist corner of the ruling Concertación coalition that prevailed Sunday, while Frei is a more moderate centrist. To keep his fellow socialists happy, Lagos is going to have to be more proactive on human rights issues, analysts said.

"Lagos is going to have to be consistent between what he has said and what he does," said analyst Guillermo Holzmann at the University of Chile, highlighting Lagos' promise to make Chilean courts work independently and be respected.

That should give more hope to Judge Guzmán who will find himself in the center of the controversy if Pinochet returns to Chile.

JAN. 18, 2000

SOCIALIST VICTORY

Chile elects ex-dissident Lagos president

SANTIAGO (Reuters) Chileans on Sunday elected soft-line socialist Ricardo Lagos as their new president, the country's first leftist leader since Salvador Allende was ousted by former dictator Augusto Pinochet in a bloody 1973 coup.

Lagos, 61, a one-time dissident who stood up to Pinochet as Chile struggled to return to democracy, swept to a slim but comfortable victory over his rightwing rival, Joaquin Lavín, a former adviser to the Pinochet dictatorship.

"We have triumphed . . . but it is a defeat for no one. I will be the president for all Chileans," Lagos told an estimated 60,000 supporters packed into the square in front of the La Moneda presidential palace, bombed by Pinochet on the day of his coup.

"In my government, every-

one will be equal in terms of the law and justice," the candidate for the ruling center-left coalition said, a comment his supporters took as an oblique reference to Pinochet.

"Put Pinochet on trial," they started to repeatedly chant, halting the former public works minister's speech and forcing him to retort, "In my government, trials will be undertaken by the courts, and I will make the courts be respected."

Pinochet, 84, has an almost untouchable status in Chile. But his arrest in Britain and battle to avoid extradition to Spain to face torture charges have raised the hopes of human rights activists.

Lagos supporters took to the streets of Santiago and other towns and cities across Chile, honking car horns and

setting off fireworks.

With 99.77 percent of polling stations counted, Lagos clocked 51.32 percent support to 48.68 percent for Lavín, the candidate for the country's two rightwing parties.

Lagos has toned down his rhetoric since he shot to political fame in this South American nation of 15 million when he challenged Pinochet on live TV when the commander in chief of the army was still in power.

Lavín, a father of seven and former mayor of an upscale district of Santiago, came from nowhere in the last six months to launch a serious challenge to Lagos, who was odds-on favorite in mid-1999.

In favor of the death penalty and against abortion and divorce, he is a supporter and member of the conservative

Opus Dei arm of the Roman Catholic Church.

But he still promotes social reform and ran a campaign in which he pledged to put heavier emphasis on issues such as housing, education and health. He is seen as swinging the country to the left, but not radically.

Lagos will take over from President Eduardo Frei, a centrist Christian Democrat in the ruling coalition, who will step down March 11 at the end of his six-year term.

The economist and lawyer will be the third coalition president since Pinochet handed the country back over to democracy in 1990 after losing a plebiscite on his continuation in power.

Lagos had edged Lavín in the first round of voting Dec. 12, although both failed to hit

the 50 percent mark to avoid this second-round runoff ballot, spiced up last week by the prospect of Pinochet's return to Chile.

The retired general may return home from Britain as early as this week after a 15-month battle to avoid extradition to Spain to face torture charges.

In Chile, a crusading judge is investigating lawsuits filed in civil courts against the man who ran Chile with an iron fist during his 1973-1990 military regime.

Those cases have yet to turn into specific charges against the former army chief, but Pinochet would have to face them and any questions from Judge Juan Guzmán if he returned to Chile.

JAN. 18, 2000

Chile elects socialist president

SANTIAGO (AP)—Ricardo Lagos was elected Chile's first socialist president since Salvador Allende, narrowly defeating a conservative rival in a runoff election that focused more on the country's economic future than on its violent past.

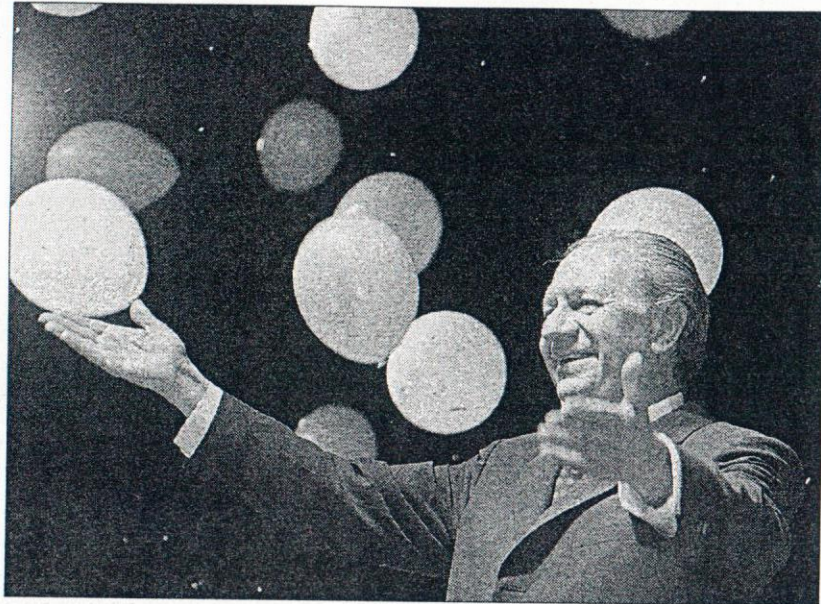
Conservative candidate Joaquin Lavín, who once worked in the government of former dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet, conceded defeat after the voting Sunday and went to Lagos' campaign headquarters at a hotel in Santiago to congratulate him. Hundreds of Lagos' supporters cheered wildly as the two appeared on a balcony and hugged each other with their wives at their sides.

A moderate socialist, Lagos has distanced himself from the radical brand of Marxism espoused by Allende, whose government was toppled in a bloody 1973 military coup led by Pinochet. Lagos was the candidate of the center-left coalition that has governed Chile since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1990.

Lagos spoke with President Eduardo Frei in a telephone conversation broadcast on television.

"Our coalition guarantees equilibrium and stability for Chile," said Lagos, whose socialists are partners with Frei's Christian Democrats in the coalition known as Concertación.

Lavín waged one of the closest



Associated Press

Socialist presidential candidate Ricardo Lagos waves to supporters gathered to celebrate his victory in the presidential election in Santiago on Sunday.

runoff races in decades for a conservative candidate, forcing Sunday's runoff after holding Lagos to a virtual tie in the first round of voting on Dec. 12.

"We shouldn't be sad because we had a spectacular number of votes," Lavín told supporters. "And I am confident that in the future, the message of change that we brought into Chilean politics will prevail," he added.

Lavín, of the right-wing Alliance for Chile, said that Lagos: "can count on me. I am at his disposal to help him face Chile's problems and to work for unity among Chileans."

With nearly all votes counted, Lagos had 51.3 percent of the vote to Lavín's 48.6 percent, Deputy Interior Minister Guillermo Pickering said.

Turnout was high, with more than

7.3 million of some 8 million registered voters peacefully casting ballots in this South American nation. Polls closed with no reports of problems.

Pinochet has been detained in Britain since October 1998 on a warrant from a Spanish judge who wants the general to stand trial for alleged human rights abuses during his rule. British Home Secretary Jack Straw said Tuesday that a panel of doctors concluded Pinochet was too ill to face trial, and that he felt inclined to send the former dictator home.

The candidates and most analysts agreed that Pinochet's situation had little if any influence on the campaign. Both candidates had said they would not oppose any efforts to try Pinochet in Chile, if he returns.

For months, the candidates sought to outdo each other with similar promises to fight rising street crime, aid struggling farmers and create hundreds of thousands of jobs.

As he cast his vote at a school in the capital, Santiago, Lavín described the runoff as a "vote-by-vote fight."

Lagos voted under similar circumstances at another Santiago school, calling the election "a party for democracy."

Lagos will be inaugurated March 11 for a six-year term, succeeding Frei, who was constitutionally barred from reelection.

Spain asks for new health test on Pinochet

MADRID (AP)—Spain has forwarded a petition calling for a new medical examination of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet to determine whether he is mentally fit to stand trial, but officials said Monday they would not appeal a decision.

The Foreign Ministry said it had given instructions to the Spanish Embassy in London to pass on Judge Baltasar Garçon's request to the British Home Office.

The move came a day before the deadline for representations to be made to the Home Office after it decided last week to review the extradition of Pinochet following a medical examination of the 84-year-old general.

Spanish Foreign Minister Abel Matutes initially said his ministry would not forward any of Garçon's requests but later said it would pass on a petition if it included fresh arguments.

The ministry's statement Monday said, however, that Spain would not appeal any decision British Home Secretary Jack Straw should make regarding the case.

It also said that Spain wished to maintain its stance of not interfering in the legal process and added that keeping good relations with Britain and Chile were its prime consideration.

Chile picks Pinochet foe

■ New president pledges to heal past wounds

SANTIAGO, Chile (AFP-Jiji) — Moderate leftist Ricardo Lagos, 61, a longtime foe of ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet, is set to become Chile's next president, after defeating his right-wing rival in Sunday's run-off elections.

When he starts his six-year term in March, Lagos will become the first left-wing president to govern Chile since So-

cialist Salvador Allende died in the coup that brought Pinochet to power in 1973.

He will also lead the third consecutive government of the center-left Concertacion Alliance since the end of military dictatorship in 1990.

Lagos garnered 51.32 percent of the vote, giving him a 2.64 point lead over Joaquin Lavin, who got 48.68 percent, accord-

ing to results announced after almost 98 percent of the ballots were counted.

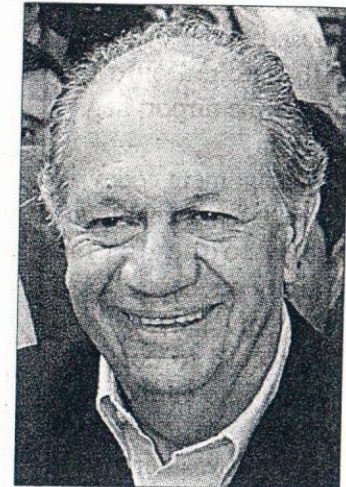
In his victory speech, Lagos pledged to heal the wounds of the past while letting justice run its course. A massive crowd of supporters erupted in a roar, interrupting him with chants of "trial for Pinochet."

Lagos who had played a key role in returning Chile to democ-

racy after 17 years of dictatorship, responded by pledging that "under my government, trials will be conducted by courts of law and the decisions of the courts will be respected."

While he has supported the Chilean government's demands that the former dictator be freed from house arrest in Britain, Lagos has also made it clear he wanted Pinochet to face the courts in Chile.

(See Chile, Page 3)



Reuters

Ricardo Lagos

Chile

(Cont'd from page 1)

Pinochet's dictatorship has been blamed for more than 3,000 deaths and many more cases of torture and arbitrary arrests.

Pledging to defend human rights, Lagos also called for national reconciliation, saying he would seek "to heal the wounds that still remain."

"I will not forget the past, but my eyes are set toward

the future," he told tens of thousands of supporters who gathered in celebration at Constitution square, which faced the presidential palace bombed during the 1973 coup.

Lagos pledged to overcome "inequalities and offer the same liberties and opportunities to everyone" and protect "the rights and dignity of everyone."

He reiterated his campaign promise of economic and

social improvement, and said he would turn Chile into the star of the 21st century.

During his campaign, Lagos, just like Lavin, had generally steered clear of controversy over the fate of Pinochet, who could return to Chile within a week, following Britain's decision not to send him to Spain, where he is charged with human rights violations.

If the former strongman heads back to Chile, his supporters are certain to fight

against any attempts to strip him of the immunity he enjoys as a senator-for-life, while human rights groups will press to have him put on trial.

Lagos had served in Allende's government and later led a coalition of parties that opposed Pinochet's dictatorship and played a key role in ending military rule.

He has served as a cabinet minister in the two Concertacion governments that followed military rule.

JAN. 30, 2000

Lagos announces new Chile Cabinet

SANTIAGO (Reuters)—Chile's leftist President-elect Ricardo Lagos announced his cabinet on Friday, filling key posts with some familiar faces, a few new names and more women while also reducing the number of ministers.

Lagos, the first socialist leader since former dictator Augusto Pinochet ousted Salvador Allende in a bloody 1973 coup, said his Cabinet choices were aimed at creating an atmosphere of "less offices and more groundwork."

Lagos, 61, will be the third president from Chile's center-left ruling coalition since Pinochet handed the country back to democracy in 1990. Lagos will take over from President Eduardo Frei on March 11.

The president-elect selected fellow socialist Jose Miguel Insulza, currently presidential chief of staff, as his interior

minister. Since Chile has no vice president, the interior minister fills that role.

Finance, the key economic post, went to Nicolas Eyzaguirre, 46, a Harvard-educated economist and former executive at the International Monetary Fund. He was a top economic adviser to Lagos in his election campaign.

Soledad Alvear was named to the Foreign Ministry after steering Lagos to his second-round Jan. 16 election victory over former Pinochet adviser Joaquin Lavín. Alvear, a former justice minister, had helped Lagos win the female vote in the runoff election and had been expected to be rewarded with a top post.

Alvear headed the list of five women named in the 16-post Cabinet that Lagos reduced from 21 ministers. Previous ruling party presidents had

named just two or three women to the cabinets in this conservative Latin nation of 15 million.

Lagos lumped Economy, Energy and Mining into a new super ministry to be headed by Jose de Gregorio, another economic adviser during his presidential campaign.

The key Defense Ministry post went to Mario Fernandez, who was a workhorse as deputy defense minister and will handle relations with Chile's still-influential military and their father figure—Pinochet.

Alvaro Garcia, former economy minister under Frei, was given the political post of presidential chief-of-staff, while Claudio Huepe, 60, a long-standing coalition politician, was named government spokesman.

"This team will maintain the politi-

cal balance of the ruling coalition. It is a group of efficient professionals, of a high standard and above all of tremendous public service spirit," Lagos said, announcing his team on live national television.

"It will be a Cabinet whose priority is listening to and serving the people," Lagos said, echoing comments he made after his narrow election victory in which he said Chileans wanted change after 10 years of coalition rule.

The coalition government had been criticized for a lack of vitality and for continuing policies, especially on the economic front, similar to those of the Pinochet's 1973-1990 dictatorship.

Criticisms grew in 1999 as the country slumped into its first recession for almost 20 years that nearly cost the coalition victory this month.