THE LEGACY OF A DEMOCRAT

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Patricio Aylwin



Presentation

Speech by Patricio Aylwin upon being proclaimed the presidential candidate of the Coalition of Parties for Democracy
July 16, 1989
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives

"I am a Chilean of middle-class background, devoted to my family and to my country. I was fortunate to be born into a home where I learned to remain faithful to the truth, to always seek justice, and to respect others, especially the poor.

I believe in God. I believe in humankind, in the superior dignity of every human being. For that same reason, I believe in the people. In the prudence, common sense, and innate wisdom of ordinary men.

I understand life as a task. From childhood, I felt that my task was justice: to fight for justice. That is what I have sought to do throughout my life. That is why I became a lawyer and a professor of law. That is why I entered politics: to fight for justice for our people.

As a Christian, I seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, trusting that all else will follow. As a democrat, I believe in the capacity and the right of the people to decide their own destiny. I defend the freedom of my adversary and have learned always to respect opinions that differ from my own. (…)

I believe in reason and the law. I conceive force solely as an instrument of reason and law. I categorically reject violence.

I am a party man. For nearly half a century, I have been a Christian Democrat because I believe in the values and principles of Christian humanism."



Childhood and School Years

> “When I was seven or eight years old, my maternal grandfather used to tell me, ‘You are going to be President of the Republic.’ I think he said the same thing to all his grandchildren.”
>
> *(Patricio Aylwin quoted in “El poder de la paradoja,” Uqbar Publishers, 2013)*

Lawyer, academic, politician, and former President of Chile, Patricio Aylwin was born in Viña del Mar on November 26, 1918. His father, Miguel Aylwin Gajardo, originally from the Constitución area, was a teacher and lawyer, a Freemason, and president of the Santiago Liberal Center. In 1924, he joined the judiciary and eventually became President of the Supreme Court in 1957. His mother, Laura Azócar Álvarez, from San Fernando, was a Catholic woman with deep compassion for the problems faced by people and played a particularly important role in the upbringing of her five children: Patricio, Carmen, Andrés, Arturo, and Tomás. Both parents instilled in them a vocation for public service, social justice, and respect for human dignity.

Much of the childhood and youth of the Aylwin Azócar family was spent in San Bernardo, where they moved in late 1928 to a large house located across from the railway workshops. The house became a gathering place for the family until the death of the family patriarch in 1976.



Patricio Aylwin at age 3
December 1921
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Patricio Aylwin at age 8
1926
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Patricio Aylwin and his siblings on the beach in Constitución
1936
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Photomontage “Spending the summer in Constitución”
Patricio Aylwin
February 10, 1932
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives



Patricio Aylwin behind the wheel of the family Ford Model T, accompanied by his siblings and cousins at the family house in San Bernardo.
1942
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Laura Azócar and Miguel Aylwin Gajardo in Constitución
1940
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

Patricio and his siblings attended the Boys' High School of San Bernardo: "From a young age, I was a relatively good student and a young man deeply concerned about what was happening in Chile and around the world, with a strong sense of what would later be called 'social justice' and a certain degree of rebellion against the existing order." (Patricio Aylwin quoted in "*El reencuentro de los demócratas*," Grupo Zeta Editions, 1998).

His high school years were intense. Together with other young people, he founded the Magallanes Moure Cultural Academy, became a member of the Chess Club, and promoted a variety of social initiatives.

He also participated in drafting the statutes of the Students' and Alumni Association of the Boys' High School of San Bernardo.

In 1935, Patricio Aylwin completed his final year of secondary education at the National Boarding School Barros Arana. By then, his humanist vocation was already evident and found expression in his earliest writings, which reveal the influence of books such as *Sub Sole* and *Sub Terra* by Baldomero Lillo, *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, and *History of the Girondists* by Alphonse de Lamartine.



Article: "Memories of High School"
Patricio Aylwin
1937





Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives

Speech delivered on
the twenty-first
anniversary of the
Boys' High School
of San Bernardo
Patricio Aylwin
April 1, 1934
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives

University Years and Academic Life

> “But should we devote our efforts solely to study? Around us there are problems demanding attention, suffering that cries out, and injustices that call for action. Can we remain indifferent in the face of them? Solutions are urgently needed; time is running out.”

(Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin’s speech delivered at the inauguration of the Academy of Legal and Social Studies, November 1939)

After completing his secondary education, Aylwin enrolled in the Law school at the University of Chile in March 1936. An outstanding student, his university years were marked by a strong commitment to society. Together with other law students, he founded the Academy of Legal and Social Studies; served on the Commission for the Reform of the Regulations and Curriculum of the Law Schools; acted as Secretary of the Drafting Commission for the Organic Code of Courts; was a member of the organizing committee of the Center for Social Studies, created to help address the problems faced by the residents of San Bernardo; also belonged to the Ariel Cultural Center of San Bernardo; and led the University Committee for the Defense of Chile’s Dignity.

The articles and essays he wrote during these years, many of them published in the San Bernardo newspaper *La Idea*, reveal a young man confronting a changing world and asking himself: What should be done? How should these circumstances be faced?



Excerpt from the speech delivered at the inauguration of the Academy of Legal and Social Studies
Patricio Aylwin
November 6, 1939
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives



Certificate issued by the University of Chile confirming Patricio Aylwin’s law degree examination
August 10, 1943
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives

> “If we want to be true men, we must choose justice and genuinely strive to achieve it.”

(Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin’s essay “Defining Positions,” 1940)



Summary of Patricio Aylwin’s university record attached to a letter sent to Juan Hamilton
December 30, 1949
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives



Patricio Aylwin
1936
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

In June 1943, Patricio Aylwin submitted his thesis, "*El juicio arbitral*" (Arbitration Proceedings), which was awarded the highest distinction and remains a mandatory reference in the field of arbitration. In August of that same year, he sat for his examination on administrative acts in order to obtain his law degree, earning the highest honors.

After being sworn in as a lawyer in January 1944, Aylwin began practicing law. At the same time, he launched his academic career.

He taught civics and political economy at the Instituto Nacional and administrative law at the University of Chile—from 1946 to 1966—and at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile—from 1952 to 1960. He also served as secretary of the Chilean Institute of Legislative Studies. From his earliest years as a teaching assistant, and later as a professor, his commitment to education—and especially to the formation of students—was evident.





Excerpt from the article on the university and reform
Patricio Aylwin
1943
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives

> "Our university has only professors and students; it lacks masters and disciples. The former, with a few honorable exceptions, are content merely teaching the material; the latter, as a rule, are satisfied with learning only what is necessary to pass their examinations. It is a sad but undeniable fact that our university environment lacks a genuine interest in the fundamental issues that should concern it: culture and its dissemination throughout society; scientific research; and the selfless and honest application of human knowledge to the social problems that affect the world, and Chile in particular (…) True university reform consists in giving the university genuinely committed scholars."

(Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin's article on the university and reform, 1943)

Family Life

> “Patricio never abandoned politics, no matter how many years passed, but I was always very independent. Even so, we had a very close life together; we never, ever argued. Patricio always expressed himself very kindly—he was a true gentleman. Patricio and I loved spending time in this house. The children call it ‘Grandpa’s house,’ while I call it ‘my beloved home.’ If I could give this house a symbolic name, I would call it ‘the house with open doors’.”
>
> *(Leonor Oyarzún, December 2016)*

In October 1947, during a coal miners’ strike, Aylwin denounced the harsh living conditions they endured and emphasized the legitimacy of their demands: “The fundamental and underlying cause of the coal conflict lies in the deplorable conditions in which the miners live (...) The social peace that is so greatly desired cannot be imposed; it must be the result of a patient and determined effort of human understanding and solidarity. Justice cannot be given as a gift, because it humiliates; nor can it be imposed by force, because it wounds.” (Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin’s article “The Truth About Coal,” 1947)

Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin’s article “The Truth About Coal” 1947



Patricio Aylwin and Leonor Oyarzún on their wedding day
October 2, 1948
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

Reading this article made a profound impression on Leonor Oyarzún Ivanovic, who had been born in Curicó in 1919 and was active in the Catholic Action movement. The article impressed her so much that she wanted to meet its author. A mutual friend introduced them, and less than a year later Patricio and Leonor were married at Las Agustinas Church on October 2, 1948.

At first, the Aylwin Oyarzún family lived in his parents’ home in San Bernardo. They later moved to Santiago, where their family began to grow. They had five children: Mariana, Isabel, Miguel Patricio, José Antonio, and Francisco, who grew up witnessing their father’s ability to balance family life with political activity.

In 1956, they settled in a house in the Providencia district, where Patricio and Leonor shared many memorable years with their children and, later, with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



Leonor Oyarzún in "Brides of the Month"
Hacia el Ideal Magazine, 1948
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Patricio Aylwin and Leonor Oyarzún
1971
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Christmas card sent by Patricio Aylwin to his electors
The image shows him with his five children: Mariana, Isabel, Miguel Patricio, José Antonio, and Francisco
1972
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Patricio Aylwin and his family
2010
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

Early Years in Politics

> To act honestly and effectively in political life, to make a useful contribution to it (...) one must first have a truth, believe it firmly, feel it with enthusiasm and fervor (...) I, unfortunately, do not possess a truth (...) I am disoriented (...) Under these circumstances, lacking the internal fire of faith to push me forward, I cannot and should not join the Falange, and it would be of no use if I did (...) But do not think that I lack the desire and ambition to act. Professional occupations alone do not fulfill me; they do not satisfy my entire vocation. An intense need to struggle dwells within me, and I harbor a thousand strengths for it."



(Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin's letter to Jorge Rogers, October 1944)

From his swearing-in as a lawyer in January 1944 until his entry into the National Falange Party, Patricio Aylwin faced a deep process of reflection.

It was a period of more doubts than certainties. Personally, he perceived that the practice of law was insufficient to combat inequality in the country, but he did not know how best to channel his concerns.

Reading the writings of Jacques Maritain, Léon Bloy, Emmanuel Mounier, and Father Lebret gradually drew Aylwin closer to social-Christian ideas, ultimately leading him to identify with Christian humanist thought.

In June 1946, he joined the National Falange of San Bernardo. A committed member, he assumed various positions within the Falangist movement, eventually becoming its president in 1951. Furthermore, he ran as a candidate for city councilor for San Bernardo and for deputy for the 4th district of the province of Santiago, losing on both occasions.

In 1957, the National Falange and the Chilean Social Christian Parties merged, giving rise to the Chilean Christian Democratic Party (PDC, in Spanish). A year later, Patricio Aylwin was elected president of the party, marking the first of many occasions on which he would lead the PDC. In May 1959, Aylwin reaffirmed that the struggle for social justice was fundamental to his political ideology; he expressed this in his speech "*Por la liberación del hombre*" (For the Liberation of Man), which, in his own words, contained his deepest thought:

"The great task of the men of this century: the liberation of man. Liberation from misery, through the harmonious development of the nations' economies and a fair redistribution of wealth. Liberation from tyranny, through the practice of an effective democracy that guarantees the natural rights of man and in which everyone participates in political power. Liberation from ignorance, through the maximum extension of education at all levels (…)" (Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin's speech entitled "*Por la liberación del hombre*," May 27, 1959)



Letter from Enrique Gandásegui, President of the National Falange of San Bernardo, and Julio Cerpa, Secretary, to Patricio Aylwin, approving his application to join the National Falange
June 8, 1946
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives



Speech delivered by Patricio Aylwin upon assuming office as National President of the National Falange
1951
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives



Cover of the speech "Por la liberación del hombre"
Patricio Aylwin
1959
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives



Board of Directors of the National Falange
1957
In: Patricio Aylwin Azócar, Una vida republicana: convicción, política y doctrina
Chilean National Library Collection



Christian Democratic Party Meeting
1960s
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

The 1960s

> “In recent years, the party has experienced a true ideological penetration that distances it more and more from its authentic doctrinal principles (...) Christian Democracy must once again become an alternative between the capitalist right and the Marxist left.”

(Excerpt from the political document prepared by Patricio Aylwin to be presented at the Third National Congress of the Christian Democratic Party, November 18, 1968)

The 1960s brought great victories for Christian Democracy. These were also years in which Patricio Aylwin consolidated his role as a political leader.

In the 1964 presidential election, the PDC candidate, Eduardo Frei Montalva, was elected. Aylwin was a major collaborator of the government, supporting and defending the “Revolution in Liberty”.

In the 1965 parliamentary elections, Patricio Aylwin was elected senator for the sixth provincial grouping of Curicó, Talca, Linares, and Maule.

Frei Montalva's government program generated a growing ideological polarization. Within the ruling coalition, Patricio Aylwin played a decisive role, confronting factions that pushed to deepen changes, accelerate reforms, and encourage agreements with the extreme left.

As a parliamentarian, he was noted for his amendment to the Agrarian Reform regarding the repossession of expropriated lands, which gave rise to Law No. 17,280 of Chile (1970), also known as the “Aylwin Law.” Alongside this, he was one of the first to denounce Colonia Dignidad.

On the international stage, in 1969, he served as president of the Chilean Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly.



Chilean Christian Democratic Party Rally
1960s
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Patricio Aylwin at the United Nations General Assembly
1969
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Excerpt from the “Message on the Draft Bill Amending Law No. 16,640 of Chile on Agrarian Reform”
Patricio Aylwin
December 12, 1968
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives

The 1970s

> “(…) from our clear opposition stance, we remain faithful to our devotion to the constitutional regime; we repudiate its disruption, wherever it may come from, and as long as there is any possibility of overcoming the crisis facing Chile through institutional means, we will do everything within our power to achieve it..”

(Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin's speech entitled “Aún es tiempo” [There is Still Time], July 11, 1973)

During the years of the Popular Unity government, Patricio Aylwin was a prominent actor on the political stage, serving as senator, President of the Senate, and national president of the PDC.

Aylwin sought a path that would restore coexistence among Chileans and find a democratic solution to the crisis affecting the country.

In September 1973, the military coup took place, overthrowing the Popular Unity government. The following day, the national board of the PDC, led by Patricio Aylwin, declared: “Christian Democracy regrets what has occurred. Faithful to its principles, it exhausted all efforts to reach a solution through institutional political channels and will not shirk them to achieve the disarming of minds and hands, pacification, the reconstruction of Chile, and the return to institutional normalcy, postponing, as always, its partisan interests for the higher good of the nation.” (Excerpt from the declaration of the National Board of the PDC, September 12, 1973)

Before long, it became clear that the dictatorship would not be transitory. As president of Christian Democracy, Aylwin took on a major challenge: “We live under a military dictatorship regime (...) It is a duty to define a policy that allows Christian Democracy to save its body and soul, with the goal of obtaining the swiftest restoration of democracy to guide a new society in Chile (...) The party's attitude must be neither defeatist nor servile, nor one of outright opposition or warfare.” (Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin's remarks at a meeting of the PDC Executive Board, November 7, 1973)



Patricio Aylwin, President of the Senate
June 20, 1971
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

> “And to all Chileans who truly wish to restore democracy, but who wonder in good faith what the formula or path to do so is, or who doubt the possibility of a national consensus, we present our proposals as clear proof that with goodwill, without hatred or prejudice, it is possible to reach fundamental agreements among Chileans of all tendencies—as we are—and we ask you to ponder them as serious and viable foundations so that, following the mandate of its vocation and history, Chile may reunite with democracy.”

(Excerpt from the manifesto entitled “Fundamental Bases for Constitutional Reform: Report to the Chilean People on the Main Agreements Reached by the Constitutional Studies Group, Known as the Group of 24,” 1979)

In October 1976, faced with the delicate situation the country was going through and noticing that discouragement was taking hold of his comrades, Patricio Aylwin felt that the time had come to step down from the party's leadership. Following his resignation, he promoted the formation of a pluralistic and democratic reflection group to propose an alternative institutional framework to the dictatorship. Thus, in July 1978, the Constitutional Studies Group—or the “Group of 24”—was born, around which the reunion of democrats began to take shape, a key step toward achieving the necessary consensus for the country's democratic recovery.





Manifesto of the Constitutional Studies Group inviting the creation of a New Institutional Framework and a New Constitution for Chile
July 31, 1978
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives



Members of the Constitutional Studies Group, “Group of 24.” Pictured are Patricio Aylwin, Julio Subercaseaux, Eduardo Jara, Francisco Cumplido, Manuel Sanhueza, and Héctor Correa
August 19, 1978
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

The 1980s

> “The parties in the ‘No’ coalition have agreed to participate in this process because we believe that the plebiscite provides the people with an opportunity to express their will regarding Chile’s future (…) The plebiscite will determine much more than just one person; it will determine the type or form of government we want for Chile.”

(Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin’s article titled “The Meaning of No,” June 16, 1988)

The 1980s were characterized by protests against the dictatorship, increasing violence, and efforts to reach agreements among democratic sectors. In July 1984, Patricio Aylwin was among those who led the call to confront and defeat the dictatorship through legal and political means: “The only way out of a situation like this is through civil war (…) or through the reunion and reconciliation of the two or three versions of Chile that exist today on our homeland’s soil. The first is the violent solution, imposed by force. The second is the peaceful solution, achieved through the paths of reason and law. That is to say, political and legal.” (Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin’s speech titled “Reflection on a Legal and Political Solution for Chile,” July 1984)



March organized by the Chilean Democratic Alliance under the slogan “Chile Demands Democracy,” in O'Higgins Park
November 21, 1985
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Patricio Aylwin registering the PDC in the electoral rolls
September 7, 1988
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

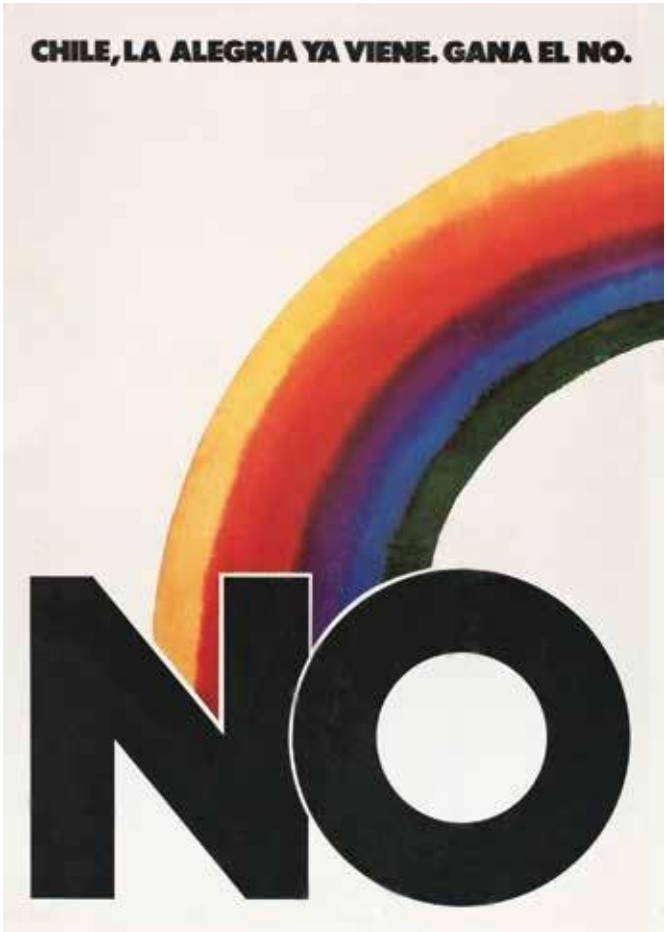
In 1986, Aylwin played an active role in drafting the "National Agreement for the Transition to Full Democracy," and a year later, he resumed the presidency of the Chilean Christian Democratic Party. One of his main objectives was to restructure the party and reorganize the opposition, prioritizing "electoral political mobilization" in response to the announcement of a plebiscite to decide whether Augusto Pinochet would remain in power and to call for elections if the results of the first vote were negative.

On February 2, 1988, Patricio Aylwin—along with other leaders—created the Coalition of Parties for the No, serving as its spokesperson. The goal of this new political coalition was to organize the campaign for the No vote in the plebiscite to be held in October.

On October 5, 1988, Chile reconnected with its democratic history. More than 7 million Chileans went to vote. The "No" vote won with 54.7% of the votes, against 43.01% for the "Yes" vote.



"No" Campaign Posters
1988
Chilean National Library Collection



"No" Campaign Posters
1988
Chilean National Library Collection





"Statement by the Coalition of Parties for the No"
January 29, 1988
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives





Guidelines for Plebiscite Day
National Command for the No
September 29, 1988
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Archives

The People Win

> “For me, the greatest achieving of my life was helping to create the Coalition of parties for Democracy. This alliance of Christian Democrats and secular democrats from the Christian social sphere together with the democratic socialist and the social democratic spheres, united by a vision to build a country where there is freedom, where there is a desire to proper and advance through economic development, where there is openness to the rest of the world, but where there is also a strong commitment to social justice—because I believe that is what we have been trying to achieve. In the history of this country over the last century, the Coalition of Parties for Democracy has been the most successful effort in the task of making Chile more democratic, but at the same time more prosperous and fairer, and more united.”

(Remarks by Patricio Aylwin at his 90th birthday celebration, November 26, 2008)

In 1989, the presidential campaign captured public attention. Patricio Aylwin was the candidate for President of the Republic representing the Coalition of Parties for Democracy. The economist Hernán Büchi and the businessman Francisco Javier Errázuriz were also candidates. Finally, on December 14, Aylwin emerged as the winner of the election with more than 55% of the votes, which meant the end of the dictatorship and the return of democracy.



Patricio Aylwin during the presidential campaign
1989
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Qué Pasa magazine
1989
Chilean National Library Collection



Patricio Aylwin's presidential campaign poster
1989
Chilean National Library Collection

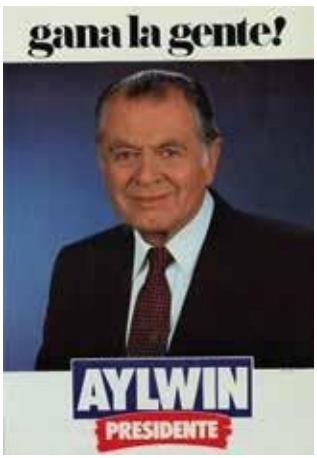


Patricio Aylwin's presidential campaign brochure
1989
Chilean National Library Collection





Patricio Aylwin's presidential campaign poster
1989
Chilean National Library Collection



Patricio Aylwin's presidential campaign poster
1989
Chilean National Library Collection



Front page of the Fortín Mapocho newspaper
December 15, 1989
Chilean National Library Collection



Patricio Aylwin's presidential campaign event
1989
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

> "I was very motivated; I didn't feel any anxiety. It was my destiny, it was my turn, I had to accept it. I felt it was a great responsibility, but at the same time there is this phenomenon that some call the 'grace of the State': one feels that it is a naturally assumed responsibility, that it has happened by God's will."
>
> *(Patricio Aylwin's response when asked about his feelings about assuming the presidency, in "El poder de la paradoja,"*

Uqbar Publishers, 2013)

Patricio Aylwin's Presidency

> "I want to say to all of you that we are entering a new stage in our national life. The hallmark of this stage is the reconciliation of Chileans beyond our differences. We must understand that we are not all the same and that we have the right to think differently. Yet because we think differently and hold different ideals, we do not cease to be fellow citizens, nor do we become enemies."



(Excerpt from Patricio Aylwin's speech before the Chilean community residing in Mexico, October 3, 1990)

Patricio Aylwin assumed the presidency on March 11, 1990, committed to uniting the country after years of division, restoring democratic institutions and the full observance of human rights, promoting economic growth and social equity, and reintegrating Chile into the international community.

One of the most memorable actions of Aylwin's administration was the creation of the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation in April 1990, chaired by jurist and former congressman Raúl Rettig. Its purpose was to investigate and prepare a report documenting the human rights violations committed during the military dictatorship. The following year, the Commission presented its final report, known as the Rettig Report. On that occasion, President Aylwin asked forgiveness, on behalf of the State, from the thousands of victims.

Under the concept of "growth with equity," Patricio Aylwin's government stimulated the economy and investment, promoted employment and wage growth, and achieved a substantial reduction in poverty—from 41% to 28%—transforming the situation of the five million people living in poverty in Chile at the beginning of the 1990s.

In the area of democratization, important milestones included the government's decision to hold municipal elections in 1992 after twenty years of appointed local authorities, as well as the revitalization of social and community organizations. During the four years of his administration, the National Corporation for Indigenous Development (CONADI, in Spanish) and the National Women's Service (SERNAM, in Spanish), among other institutions, were also established.

In March 1994, Patricio Aylwin handed over the presidential sash to Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle.



Patricio Aylwin on a presidential tour of Chile
1990
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Front page of La Época newspaper
March 12, 1990
Chilean National Library Collection



Cover of Qué Pasa magazine
March 15, 1990
Chilean National Library Collection



Patricio Aylwin receiving the Report of the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation
February 1991
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Patricio Aylwin and Leonor Oyarzún at an event held at the National Stadium
March 12, 1990
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

> “Economic growth is essential, but it is not enough to achieve the harmonious development of a country. This requires combining growth with an equitable distribution of wealth so that the benefits of growth reach everyone. For ‘development’ is more than growth; it presupposes and requires improving people’s living conditions.”

(Excerpt from a speech by Patricio Aylwin, January 20, 2005)



Presidential visit of Patricio Aylwin to Easter Island
1993
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Patricio Aylwin with his siblings and sisters-in-law at Cerro Castillo Palace
1990
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection



Patricio Aylwin during his presidency
1990

Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection

A Life in Service of Chile

> “I am convinced that this country has a much brighter future than the one experienced by those of us who are old today. It is true that we live in a diverse, complex, and uncertain world that is difficult for older generations like mine to follow and understand. It is also true that it carries risks. Yet we have young people inspired by our values of the common good, freedom, social justice, and solidarity—values whose pursuit gives meaning to our existence—and we are confident that they will continue the struggle to build the homeland we aspire to.”

(Remarks by Patricio Aylwin at an anniversary celebration of the PDC, June 26, 2010)

After leaving office, Aylwin continued his active public life. In 1994, he founded the Justice and Democracy Corporation, which sought to promote youth education programs while also providing professional advice and support for research related to the country’s development challenges. He also played an important role internationally, having been elected to chair the Latin American and Caribbean Commission on Social Development.

In 2001, President Ricardo Lagos appointed him to lead the Commission on Historical Truth and the New Deal with Indigenous Peoples. In July of that year, he temporarily assumed the presidency of the Christian Democratic Party. In January 2002, he announced his retirement from public life; nevertheless, he continued attending events and public ceremonies whenever his health allowed.

He was recognized and awarded honorary doctorates by national and international universities, including the University of Concepción, Georgetown University, the University of Notre Dame, and the Sorbonne. He also received the J. William Fulbright Prize for International Understanding in recognition of his efforts during Chile’s democratic transition.

Patricio Aylwin spent the final years of his life peacefully with his family. It was common to see him walking through his neighborhood, attending mass, and spending time with friends. He passed away on April 19, 2016, and was honored with a state funeral attended by citizens and political leaders alike.



Patricio Aylwin at his home in Providencia 2012
Patricio Aylwin Foundation Collection









Funeral of Patricio Aylwin
April 20, 2016
Chilean National Library Collection


EL MERCURIO

Falleció Patricio Aylwin, Presidente de la transición pacífica a la democracia

1918-2016

Front page of El Mercurio newspaper
April 20, 2016
Chilean National Library Collection

> “I would like to be remembered as a man who devoted the greatest effort of his life to helping make Chile a more prosperous and more just country. More just, above all. Justice, freedom, and prosperity.”
>
> *(Patricio Aylwin quoted in Preguntas que hacen historia, Catalonia, 2010)*