

= Raúl Alfonsín =

Raúl Ricardo Alfonsín Foulkes (12 March 1927 ? 31 March 2009) was an Argentine lawyer , politician and statesman who served as the President of Argentina from 10 December 1983 , to 8 July 1989 . Born in Chascomús , Buenos Aires Province , he began his studies of law at the National University of La Plata and was a graduate of the University of Buenos Aires . He was affiliated with the Radical Civic Union (UCR) , joining the faction of Ricardo Balbín after the party split .

He was elected a deputy in the legislature of the Buenos Aires province in 1958 , during the presidency of Arturo Frondizi , and a national deputy during the presidency of Arturo Umberto Illia . He opposed both sides of the Dirty War , and several times filed a writ of Habeas corpus , requesting the freedom of victims of forced disappearances , during the National Reorganization Process . He denounced the crimes of the military dictatorship of other countries , and opposed the actions of both sides in the Falklands War as well . He became the leader of the UCR after Balbín 's death , and was the Radical candidate for the presidency in the 1983 elections , which he won .

When he became president , he sent a bill to the Congress to revoke the self @-@ amnesty law established by the military . He established the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons to investigate the crimes committed by the military , which led to the Trial of the Juntas and resulted in the sentencing of the heads of the former regime . Discontent within the military led to the mutinies of the Carapintadas , leading Alfonsín to appease them with the full stop law and the law of Due Obedience . He also had conflicts with the unions , which were controlled by the opposing Justicialist Party . He resolved the Beagle conflict , increased trade with Brazil , and proposed the creation of the Contadora support group to mediate between the United States and the Nicaraguan Contras . He passed the first divorce law of Argentina . He initiated the Austral plan to improve the national economy , but that plan , as well as the Spring plan , failed . The resulting hyperinflation and riots led to his party 's defeat in the 1989 presidential elections , which was won by Peronist Carlos Menem .

He continued as the leader of the UCR , and opposed the presidency of Carlos Menem . He initiated the Pact of Olivos with Menem in order to negotiate the terms for the 1994 amendment of the Argentine Constitution . Fernando de la Rúa led a faction of the UCR that opposed the pact , and eventually became president in 1999 . De la Rúa resigned during the December 2001 riots , and Alfonsín 's faction provided the support needed for the Peronist Eduardo Duhalde to be appointed president by the Congress . Alfonsín died of lung cancer on 31 March 2009 , at the age of 82 , and was given a large state funeral .

= = Early life and career = =

Raúl Alfonsín was born on 12 March 1927 , in the city of Chascomús , 123 km (76 mi) south of Buenos Aires . His parents were Serafín Raúl Alfonsín Ochoa and Ana María Foulkes . His father was of Galician and German descent , and his mother was the daughter of Welsh immigrant Ricardo Foulkes and Falkland Islander María Elena Ford . Following his elementary schooling , Raúl Alfonsín enrolled at the General San Martín Military Lyceum , graduating after five years as a second lieutenant . He did not pursue a military career , and began studying law instead . He began his studies at the National University of La Plata , and completed them at the University of Buenos Aires , graduating at the age of 23 . He married María Lorenza Barreneche , whom he met in the 1940s at a masquerade ball , in 1949 . They moved to Mendoza , La Plata , and returned to Chascomús . They had six sons , of whom only Ricardo Alfonsín would also follow a political career .

Alfonsín bought a local newspaper (El Imparcial) . He joined the Radical Civic Union (UCR) in 1946 , as a member of the Intransigent Renewal Movement , a faction of the party that opposed the incorporation of the UCR into the Democratic Union coalition . He was appointed president of the party committee in Chascomús in 1951 , and was elected to the city council in 1954 . He was detained for a brief time , during the reaction of the government of Juan Perón to the bombing of

Plaza de Mayo . The Revolución Libertadora ousted Perón from the national government ; Alfonsín was again briefly detained and forced to leave his office in the city council . The UCR broke up into two parties : the Intransigent Radical Civic Union (UCRI) , led by Arturo Frondizi , and the People 's Radical Civic Union (UCRP) , led by Ricardo Balbín and Crisólogo Larralde . Alfonsín did not like the split , but opted to follow the UCRP .

Alfonsín was elected deputy for the legislature of the Buenos Aires province in 1958 , on the UCRP ticket , and was reelected in 1962 . He moved to La Plata , capital of the province , during his tenure . President Frondizi was ousted by a military coup on 29 March 1962 , which also closed the provincial legislature . Alfonsín returned to Chascomús . The UCRP prevailed over the UCRI the following year , leading to the presidency of Arturo Umberto Illia . Alfonsín was elected a national deputy , and then vice president of the UCRP bloc in the congress . In 1963 he was appointed president of the party committee for the province of Buenos Aires .

Illia was deposed by a new military coup in June 1966 , the Argentine Revolution . Alfonsín was detained while trying to hold a political rally in La Plata , and a second time when he tried to re-open the UCRP committee . He was forced to resign as deputy in November 1966 . He was detained a third time in 1968 after a political rally in La Plata . He also wrote opinion articles in newspapers , under the pseudonyms Alfonso Carrido Lura and Serafín Feijó . The Dirty War began during this time , as many guerrilla groups rejected both the right wing military dictatorship and the civil governments , preferring instead a left wing dictatorship aligned with the Soviet Union , as in the Cuban Revolution . Alfonsín clarified in his articles that he rejected both the military dictatorship and the guerrillas , asking instead for free elections . The UCRP became the UCR once more ; and the UCRI was turned into the Intransigent Party . Alfonsín created the Movement for Renewal and Change within the UCR , to challenge Balbín 's leadership of the party . The military dictatorship finally called for free elections , allowing Peronism (which had been banned since 1955) to take part in them . Balbín defeated Alfonsín in the primary elections , but lost in the main ones . Alfonsín was elected deputy once more .

Illia was invited in 1975 to a diplomatic mission to the Soviet Union ; he declined and proposed instead . Upon his return , Alfonsín became one of the founding members of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights . He served as the defense lawyer for Mario Roberto Santucho , leader of the ERP guerrillas , but only to carry out due process of law , and not because of a genuine desire to support him . The 1976 Argentine coup d'état against President Isabel Martínez de Perón started the National Reorganization Process . Alfonsín filed several Habeas corpus motions , requesting the freedom of victims of forced disappearances . He also visited other countries , denouncing those disappearances and violations of human rights . He established the magazine *Propuesta y control* in 1976 , one of the few magazines that criticized the military dictatorship during its early stages . The magazine was published up to 1978 . His editorials were collected in 1980 in the book *La cuestión argentina* . He did not support the 1982 Falklands War , and criticized both the Argentine attack and the British counterattack . The Argentine defeat in the war marked the decline of the military dictatorship . The main political parties united in the *Multipartidaria* , issuing a joint request to the dictatorship to call for elections . Alfonsín proposed the appointment of Arturo Illia as the head of state of a transition government , similar to the *Metapolitefsi* in Greece . The Movement for Renewal and Change took control of the UCR ; Balbín had died the previous year .

= = Presidential campaign = =

Alfonsín was appointed candidate of the UCR for the 1983 general elections , with Víctor Martínez as candidate for the vice presidency . Fernando de la Rúa , who would have run in the primary elections against him , declined his candidacy because of Alfonsín 's huge popularity . The publicity was managed by David Ratto , who created the slogan " Ahora Alfonsín " (Spanish : " Now Alfonsín ") , and the gesture of the shaking hands . His campaign used a non confrontational approach , in stark contrast with the Peronist candidate for the governorship of the Buenos Aires province , Herminio Iglesias . Iglesias burned a coffin with the seals of the UCR on live television , which generated a political scandal . Both Iglesias and Ítalo Luder , the Peronist candidate to the

presidency , saw a decrease in their public image as a result .

During the campaign , both parties made similar proposals to reduce authoritarianism and the political influence of the military , and to maintain the Argentine claim in the Falkland Islands sovereignty dispute . Alfonsín denounced a pact between the military and the Peronist unions that sought an amnesty for the military . He maintained that the armed forces should be subject to the civilian government , and that unions should be regulated . He also proposed an investigation into the actions of the military during the Dirty War . He closed his campaign by reading the preamble of the constitution of Argentina . The last rally was at the Plaza de la República , and was attended by 400 @, @ 000 people .

The elections were held on 30 October . The Alfonsín ? Martínez ticket won with 51 @. @ 7 % of the vote , followed by Luder ? Bittel with 40 @. @ 1 % . It was the first time since the rise of Perón that the Peronist party was defeated in elections without electoral fraud or proscription . The UCR won 128 seats in the Assembly , forming a majority ; and 18 seats in the Senate , constituting a minority . 18 provinces elected radical governors , and 17 elected governors from either the Justicialist or local parties . Alfonsín took office on 10 December , and gave a speech from the Buenos Aires Cabildo .

= = Presidency = =

= = = First days = = =

The presidential inauguration of Alfonsín was attended by Isabel Perón . Despite internal recriminations for the defeat , the Peronist party agreed to support Alfonsín as president , to prevent a return of the military . By this time , the left @-@ wing terrorism had been neutralized and was no longer a menace . There were still factions in the military ambitious to keep an authoritarian government , and groups such as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo seeking reparations for the actions of the military during the Dirty War .

Three days after taking office , Alfonsín sent a bill to the Congress to revoke the self @-@ amnesty law established by the military . This made it possible for the judiciary to investigate the crimes committed during the Dirty War . During the campaign , Alfonsín had promised that he would do this while Luder had been non @-@ committal . Alfonsín also ordered the initiation of judicial cases against guerrilla leaders Mario Firmenich , Fernando Vaca Narvaja , Ricardo Obregón Cano , Rodolfo Galimberti , Roberto Perdía , Héctor Pardo and Enrique Gorriarán Merlo ; and military leaders Jorge Videla , Emilio Massera , Orlando Agosti , Roberto Viola , Armando Lambruschini , Omar Graffigna , Leopoldo Galtieri , Jorge Anaya and Basilio Dami Dozo . He also requested the extradition of guerrilla leaders who were living abroad .

Most of the first cabinet , organised in Chascomús , was composed of trusted colleagues of Alfonsín . Alfonsín appointed as minister of labour Antonio Mucci , who belonged to a faction of the UCR that sought to reduce the influence of Peronism among labour unions , and promptly sent a bill to Congress designed to promote independent unions . Facing an economic crisis , he appointed Bernardo Grinspun as minister of the economy . He appointed Aldo Neri minister of health , Dante Caputo minister of foreign relations , Antonio Tróccoli minister of interior affairs , Roque Carranza minister of public works , Carlos Alconada Aramburu minister of education , and Raúl Borrás minister of defense . Juan Carlos Pugliese led the chamber of deputies , and Edison Otero was the provisional president of the senate . Many presidential negotiations took place at the Quinta de Olivos , the official residence of the president , rather than at the Casa Rosada .

= = = Aftermath of the Dirty War = = =

The first priority of Raúl Alfonsín was to consolidate democracy , incorporate the armed forces into their standard role in a civilian government , and prevent further military coups . Alfonsín first tried to reduce the political power of the military with budget cuts , reductions of military personnel and

changing their political tasks . As for the crimes committed during the Dirty War , Alfonsín was willing to respect the command responsibility and accept the " superior orders " defense for the military of lower ranks , as long as the Junta leaders were sentenced under military justice . This project was resisted by human rights organisations such as Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and public opinion , as it was expected that the defendants would be acquitted or receive low sentences . The military considered that the Dirty War was a legally sanctioned war , and considered the prosecutions to be unjustified . Alfonsín also established the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) , composed of several well @-@ known personalities , to document cases of forced disappearances , human rights violations and abduction of children . Alfonsín sent a military code bill to the Congress , so that the military would use it . In its " Nunca más " report (Spanish : Never again) , the CONADEP revealed the wide scope of the crimes committed during the Dirty War , and how the Supreme Council of the military had supported the military 's actions against the guerrillas .

As a result , Alfonsín sponsored the Trial of the Juntas , in which , for the first time , the leaders of a military coup in Argentina were on trial . The first hearings began at the Supreme Court in April 1985 and lasted for the remainder of the year . In December , the tribunal handed down life sentences for Jorge Videla and former Navy Chief Emilio Massera , as well as 17 @-@ year sentences for Roberto Eduardo Viola . President Leopoldo Galtieri was acquitted of charges related to the repression , but he was court @-@ martialed in May 1986 for malfeasance during the Falklands War . Ramón Camps received a 25 @-@ year sentence . The trials did not focus only on the military : Mario Firmenich was captured in Brazil in 1984 and extradited to Argentina . José López Rega was extradited from Miami in 1986 , because of his links with the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance .

The military were supported by the families of the victims of subversion , a group created to counter the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo . This group placed the blame of the Dirty War on the guerrillas , but had few followers . The trials were followed by bomb attacks and rumors of military protests and even a possible coup . Alfonsín sought to appease the military by raising their budget . As that was not enough , he proposed the full stop law , to set a deadline for Dirty War @-@ related prosecutions . The Congress approved the law , despite strong opposition from the public . Prosecutors rushed to start cases before the deadline , filing 487 charges against 300 officers , with 100 of them still in active service . Major Ernesto Barreiro refused to appear in court , and started a mutiny in Córdoba . Lieutenant Colonel Aldo Rico started another mutiny at Campo de Mayo , supporting Barreiro . The rebels were called " Carapintadas " (Spanish : " Painted faces ") because of their use of military camouflage . The CGT called a general strike in support of Alfonsín , and large masses rallied in the Plaza de Mayo to support the government . Alfonsín negotiated directly with the rebels and secured their surrender . He announced the end of the crisis from the balcony of the Casa Rosada . The mutineers eventually surrendered , but the government proceeded with the Law of Due Obedience to regulate the trials . However , the timing of both events was exploited by the military , and the opposition parties described the outcome as a surrender by Alfonsín .

Aldo Rico escaped from prison in January 1988 and started a new mutiny in a distant regiment in the northeast . This time , both the military support for the mutiny and the public outcry against it were minimal . The army attacked him , and Rico surrendered after a brief combat . Colonel Mohamed Alí Seineldín launched a new mutiny in late 1988 . As in 1987 , the mutineers were defeated and jailed , but the military was reluctant to open fire against them . Alfonsín 's goal of reconciling the military with the civil population failed , as the latter rejected the military 's complaints , and the military was focused on internal issues . The Movimiento Todos por la Patria , a small guerrilla army led by Enrique Gorriarán Merlo , staged the attack on the Regiment of La Tablada in 1989 . The army killed many of their members , and quickly defeated the uprising .

= = = Relation with unions = = =

Peronism still controlled the labor unions , the most powerful ones in all of Latin America . The biggest one was the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) . Alfonsín sought to reduce the Peronist influence over the unions , fearing that they may become a destabilizing force for the fledgling democracy . He rejected their custom of holding single @-@ candidate internal elections ,

and deemed them totalitarian and not genuine representatives of the workforce . His proposal was to change the laws for those internal elections , remove the union leaders appointed during the dictatorship , and elect new ones under the new laws . The CGT rejected the proposal as interventionist , and prompted Peronist politicians to vote against it . The law was approved by the Chamber of Deputies but failed to pass in the Senate by one vote . A second bill proposed simply a call to elections , without supervision from the government , which was approved . As a result , the unions remained Peronist .

The CGT was splintered in internal factions at the time . Lorenzo Miguel had close ties to the Justicialist party , and led " the 62 organisations " faction . Saúl Ubaldini was more confrontational , distrusted the politicians of the PJ , and was eventually appointed secretary general of the CGT . His lack of political ties allowed him to work as a mediator between the union factions . Carlos Alderete led a faction closer to Alfonsín , named " the 15 " unions . The government sought to deepen the internal divisions between the unions by appointing Alderete as minister of labour and promoting legislation to benefit his faction . He was removed after the defeat in the 1987 midterm elections , but the government stayed on good terms with his faction .

Alfonsín kept a regulation from the dictatorship that allowed him to regulate the level of wages . He authorized wage increases every three months , to keep them up to the inflation rate . The CGT rejected this , and proposed instead that wages be determined by free negotiations . Alfonsín allowed strike actions , which were forbidden during the dictatorship , which gave the unions another way to expand their influence . There were thirteen general strikes and thousands of minor labor conflicts . However , unlike similar situations in the past , the CGT sided with Alfonsín during the military rebellions , and did not support the removal of a non @-@ Peronist president . The conflicts were caused by high inflation , and the unions requested higher wages in response to it . The unions got the support of the non @-@ unionized retirees , the church and left @-@ wing factions . Popular support for the government allowed it to endure in spite of opposition from the unions .

= = = Social policies = = =

With the end of the military dictatorship , Alfonsín pursued cultural and educational policies aimed at reducing the authoritarian customs of several institutions and groups . He also promoted freedom of the press . Several intellectuals and scientists who had left the country in the previous decade returned , which benefited the universities . The University of Buenos Aires returned to the quality levels that it had in the 1960s . Many intellectuals became involved in politics as well , providing a cultural perspective to the political discourse . Both Alfonsín and the Peronist Antonio Cafiero benefited .

Divorce was legalized by a law passed in 1987 . The church opposed it , but it had huge popular support that included even Catholic factions , who reasoned that marital separation already existed , and divorce simply made it explicit . The church opposed Alfonsín after that point . The church successfully exerted pressure to prevent the abolition of religious education . In line with the teachings of Pope John Paul II , the Church criticized what it perceived as an increase in drugs , terrorism , abortion and pornography .

= = = Foreign policy = = =

Argentina had a tense relationship with the United Kingdom because of the recently ended Falklands War . The British government banned all foreign ships from the exclusion zone of the islands in 1986 . Argentina organised air and marine patrols , as well as military maneuvers in the Patagonia . However , this was not enough to placate the military hard @-@ liners in Argentina . Alfonsín proposed the postponement the sovereignty discussions , instead negotiating for a de jure cease of hostilities , with a reduction in the number of military forces and a normalization of Argentina ? United Kingdom relations . The United Kingdom did not trust the proposal , suspecting that it was a cover @-@ up for sovereignty discussions .

The Beagle conflict was still an unresolved problem with Chile , despite the 1978 Papal mediation .

The military , troubled by the trial of the juntas , called for rejection of the proposed agreement and a continuation of the country 's claim over the islands . Alfonsín called for a referendum to settle the dispute . Despite opposition from the military and the Justicialist party , who called for abstention , support for the resolution referendum reached 82 % . The bill passed in the Senate by a single vote majority , as the PJ maintained its resistance . The Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1984 between Chile and Argentina was signed the following year , ending the conflict . The human rights violations committed by the Chilean president Augusto Pinochet remained a contentious issue , as well as the revelation of Chilean help to British forces during the Falklands War . The Argentine church invited Pope John Paul II for a second visit to Argentina in 1987 , to celebrate his successful mediation . He celebrated World Youth Day next to the Obelisk of Buenos Aires , and gave a mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján .

Argentina allied with Brazil , Uruguay and Peru , three countries that had also recently ended their local military dictatorships , to mediate in the conflict between the United States and the Nicaraguan Contras . They created the Contadora support group , to support the Contadora group from South America . Both groups negotiated together , but ultimately failed because of the reluctance of both Nicaragua and the United States to change their positions . The group changed its scope later to discuss foreign debt and diplomacy with the United Kingdom in relation to the Falklands conflict .

Initially , Alfonsín refused to foster diplomatic relations with the Brazilian military government , and only did so when the dictatorship ended and José Sarney became president . One of their initial concerns was to increase Argentine ? Brazilian trade . Both presidents met in Foz do Iguaçu and issued a joint declaration about the peaceful use of nuclear power . A second meeting in Buenos Aires strengthened the trade agreements . Argentina and Brazil signed the Program of Integration and Economic Cooperation (PICE) , and in 1988 both countries and Uruguay agreed to create a common market . This led to the 1991 Treaty of Asunción , that created the Mercosur .

= = = Economic policy = = =

Alfonsín began his term with many economic problems . The foreign debt was nearly 43 billion dollars by the end of the year , and the country had narrowly prevented a sovereign default in 1982 . During that year , the gross domestic product fell by 5 @. @ 6 % , and the manufacturing profits by 55 % . Unemployment was at nearly 10 % , and inflation was nearly 209 % . It also appeared unlikely that the country would receive the needed foreign investment . The country had a deficit of \$ 6 @. @ 7 billion . Possible solutions such as a devaluation of the currency , privatization of industry , or restrictions on imports , would probably have proven to be unpopular .

Bernardo Grinspun , the first minister of the economy , arranged an increase in wages , reaching the levels of 1975 . This caused inflation to reach 32 % . He also tried to negotiate more favourable terms on the country 's foreign debt , but the negotiations failed . Risking a default , he negotiated with the IMF , which requested spending cuts . International credits prevented default at the end of 1984 , but he resigned in March 1985 when the debt reached \$ 1 billion and the IMF denied further credits . Grinspun was succeeded by Juan Vital Sourrouille , who designed the Austral plan . This plan froze prices and wages , stopped the printing of money , arranged spending cuts , and established a new currency , the Austral . The plan was a success in the short term , and choked inflation . Inflation rose again by the end of the year , the CGT opposed the wage freeze , and business community opposed the price freeze . Alfonsín thought that the privatization of some state assets and a deregulation of the economy might work , but those proposals were opposed by both the PJ and his own party .

With the support of the World Bank , the government tried new measures in 1987 , including an increase in taxes , privatizations , and a decrease in government spending . Those measures could not be enforced ; the government had lost the 1987 midterm elections , " the 15 " unions that had earlier supported the government distanced themselves from it , and the business community was unable to suggest a clear course of action . The PJ , aiming for a victory in the 1989 presidential elections , opposed the measures that it believed would have a negative social impact . The " Spring plan " sought to keep the economy stable until the elections by freezing prices and wages and

reducing the federal deficit . This plan had an even worse reception than the Austral plan , and none of the parties supported it . The World Bank and the IMF refused to extend credits to Argentina . Big exporters refused to sell dollars to the Central Bank , which depleted its reserves . The austral was devaluated in February 1989 , and the high inflation turned into hyperinflation . The 1989 presidential elections took place during this crisis , and the Justicialist Carlos Menem became the new president .

= = = Midterm elections = = =

The actions taken against the military contributed to a strong showing by the UCR in the November 1985 legislative elections . They gained one seat in the Lower House of Congress , which meant control of 130 of the 254 seats . The Justicialists lost eight seats (leaving 103) and smaller , provincial parties made up the difference . Alfonsín surprised observers in April 1986 by announcing the creation of a panel entrusted to plan a transfer of the nation 's capital to Viedma , a small coastal city 800 km (500 mi) south of Buenos Aires . His proposals boldly called for constitutional amendments creating a Parliamentary system , including a Prime Minister , and were well received by the Lower House , though they encountered strong opposition in the Senate .

The government suffered a big setback in the 1987 legislative election . The UCR lost the majority in the chamber of deputies . All provinces elected Peronist governors , with the exception of Córdoba and Río Negro . Along with the city of Buenos Aires (a federal district at the time) , they were the only districts where the UCR prevailed . As a result , the government could not move forward with its legislative agenda , and the PJ only supported minor projects . The PJ was strengthened for the 1989 presidential elections , and the UCR sought to propose governor Eduardo Angeloz as candidate . Angeloz was a rival of Alfonsín within the party .

= = Later years = =

Amid rampant inflation , Angeloz was heavily defeated by PJ candidate Carlos Menem in the 1989 election . By the winter of 1989 , the inflation had grown so severe that Alfonsín transferred power to Menem on July 8 , five months earlier than scheduled .

Alfonsín stayed on as president of the UCR , leaving after the party 's defeat in the 1991 legislative elections . Suffering damage to its image because of the hyperinflation of 1989 , the UCR lost in several districts . Alfonsín became president of the party again in 1993 . He supported the creation of a special budget for the province of Buenos Aires , led by governor Eduardo Duhalde . The radical legislator Leopoldo Moreau supported the new budget even more vehemently than the Peronists . Both parties had an informal alliance in the province . Alfonsín also supported the amendment to the constitution of Buenos Aires that allowed Duhalde to run for re @-@ election .

President Carlos Menem sought a constitutional amendment to allow his re @-@ election , and Alfonsín opposed it . The victory in the 1993 midterm elections strengthened the PJ , which approved the bill in the Senate . Menem proposed a referendum on the amendment , to force the radical deputies to support it . He also proposed a bill for a law that would allow a constitutional amendment with a simple majority of the Congress . As a result , Alfonsín made the Pact of Olivos with him . With this agreement , the UCR would support Menem 's proposal , but with further amendments that would reduce presidential power . The Council of Magistrates of the Nation reduced the influence of the executive power over the judiciary , the city of Buenos Aires would become an autonomous territory allowed to elect its own mayor , and the presidential term of office would be reduced to four years . The presidential elections would include the two @-@ round system , and the electoral college would be abolished . Alfonsín was elected to the constituent assembly that worked for the 1994 amendment of the Argentine Constitution . A faction of the UCR , led by Fernando de la Rúa , opposed the pact , but the party as a whole supported Alfonsín . The UCR got only 19 % of the vote in the elections , attaining third position in the 1995 presidential elections behind the Frepaso , when Menem was re @-@ elected . Alfonsín resigned the presidency of the party in that year .

The UCR and the Frepaso united as a political coalition , the Alliance for Work , Justice and Education , led by Alfonsín , Fernando de la Rúa and Rodolfo Terragno from the UCR , and Carlos Álvarez and Graciela Fernández Meijide from the Frepaso . The coalition won the 1997 legislative elections . Alfonsín did not agree with de la Rúa about the fixed exchange rate used by then . He thought that it had been a good measure in the past but had become detrimental to the Argentine economy , while de la Rúa supported it .

Alfonsín suffered a car crash in the Río Negro province in 1999 , during the campaign of governor Pablo Verani . They were on Route 6 , and he was ejected from the car because he was not wearing a seat belt . He was hospitalized for 39 days . De la Rúa became president in the 1999 elections , defeating the governor of Buenos Aires , Eduardo Duhalde . Alfonsín was elected Senator for Buenos Aires Province in October 2001 . De la Rúa resigned during the December 2001 riots , and the Congress appointed Adolfo Rodríguez Saá , who resigned as well . Alfonsín instructed the radical legislators to support Duhalde as the new president . He also gave him two ministers , Horacio Jaunarena for Defense and Jorge Vanossi for Justice . The radical support helped Duhalde overcome the ambitions of Carlos Ruckauf and José Manuel de la Sota , who also had ambitions to be appointed president . Alfonsín 's health problems later in the year led him to step down , to be replaced by Diana Conti .

In 2006 , Alfonsín supported a faction of the UCR that favoured the idea of carrying an independent candidate for the 2007 presidential elections . The UCR , instead of fielding its own candidate , endorsed Roberto Lavagna , a center @-@ left economist who presided over the dramatic recovery in the Argentine economy from 2002 until he parted ways with President Néstor Kirchner in December 2005 . Unable to sway enough disaffected Kirchner supporters , Lavagna garnered third place . Alfonsín was honoured by President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner with a bust of his likeness at the Casa Rosada on October 1 , 2008 . This was his last public appearance .

= = Death = =

Alfonsín died at home on 31 March 2009 , at the age of 82 , after being diagnosed a year before with lung cancer . The streets around his house at the Santa Fe avenue were filled with hundreds of people , who started a candlelight vigil . The radical Julio Cobos , Fernández de Kirchner 's vice president , was the acting president at the moment and ordered three days of national mourning . There was a ceremony in the Congress , where his body was displayed in the Blue Hall , that was attended by almost a thousand people . His widow María Lorenza Barreneche could not attend the funeral , because of her own poor health . It was attended by former presidents Carlos Menem , Fernando de la Rúa , Eduardo Duhalde and Néstor Kirchner , all the members of the Supreme Court of Argentina , mayor Mauricio Macri , governor Daniel Scioli , the president of Uruguay Tabaré Vázquez and several other politicians . The coffin was moved to La Recoleta Cemetery . He was placed next to the graves of other important historical figures of the UCR , such as Leandro N. Alem , Hipólito Yrigoyen and Arturo Illia .

At the international level , Perú set a day of national mourning , and Paraguay set three days . The governments of Brazil , Chile , Colombia , France , Mexico , Paraguay , Peru , Spain , Uruguay and the United States sent messages of condolence . In addition to Tabaré Vázquez , Julio María Sanguinetti of Uruguay , and Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil attended the ceremony .

= = Legacy = =

Historians Félix Luna , Miguel Angel de Marco and Fernando Rocchi all praise the role of Raúl Alfonsín in the aftermath of the Dirty War and the restoration of democracy . Luna also considers that Alfonsín was an effective president , and that he set an example of not using the state for personal gain . De Marco points out that it was a delicate time period , and any mistake could have endangered the newly founded democracy and led to another coup . The aforementioned historians do not agree , though , on their view of the Pact of Olivos . Luna considers that it was a necessary evil to prevent the chaos that would have been generated if Menem managed to proceed with the

constitutional amendment without negotiating with the UCR . De Marco and Rocchi instead believe that it was the biggest mistake of Alfonsín 's political career .

Alfonsín received the 1985 Princess of Asturias Award for international cooperation because of both his role in ending the Beagle dispute and his work to reestablish democracy in Argentina . Several months after his death , he was named " Illustrious Citizen of Buenos Aires Province " in 2008 , and " Illustrious Citizen of Buenos Aires " in 2009 . The latter award was granted posthumously and received by his son Ricardo Alfonsín .