

Pabloites prepare new betrayal of the Chilean working class

Andrea Lobo
8 November 2019

Mass protests in Chile have seen millions defy a military crackdown and reject hollow promises of concessions by the Sebastián Piñera administration. In response, Chile's ruling class is not only unleashing continuing police repression, but also seeking to suppress this upsurge by channeling the movement behind promises to change the 1980 Constitution established under the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

With Congress discussing the creation of a Constituent Assembly, Piñera claiming he is "open to discuss a change in the Constitution" and the corporate media posing this path as a way to "deactivate" the protests, it is clear that the fundamental aim is to defeat the democratic and social demands of workers and youth.

The Revolutionary Workers Party (PTR), which publishes *La Izquierda Diario* and holds leading positions in some trade unions, is playing its part in sowing democratic and reformist illusions in these maneuvers, while helping the Stalinist Chilean Communist Party (PCCH) and Broad Front in the same endeavor.

The Chilean protests are part of an international resurgence of workers' militancy against social inequality and mark a new stage in a two-year upsurge of the class struggle in Chile. This has included a 44-day strike at the Escondida mine, the largest copper mine in the world, a 36-day strike by Valparaíso dockworkers, the largest strike in the country's history by 17,000 Walmart workers and a 51-day teachers' strike.

Workers saw in the state of emergency and deployment of 10,000 soldiers to shoot down and torture protesters the danger of a turn to authoritarianism to preempt the emergent, working-class counteroffensive, leading to widespread demands for Piñera's ouster.

"It's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years!" became the main slogan of a movement triggered by a public transit fare hike that has challenged the entire capitalist political and social order established in the 30 years since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship. Among those severely discredited by this uprising are the PCCH and the Broad Front, which joined governments that carried out austerity programs during this period and led the unions that betrayed one strike after the other, including those mentioned above.

In a typical response by the corporate media to these historic events, the Spanish *El País* warned that "Chile burns and no one knows how to extinguish the fire." It cited the pseudo-left Broad Front as enjoying the highest approval rating of any party, but added that this amounted to only 16 percent—just 3 points higher than Piñera's. The share of Chileans who say they are not represented by any party grew in the last decade from 53 to 83 percent.

The day before protests erupted nationally on October 18, the PTR called upon the trade union confederation CUT, the Roundtable for Social Unity (a coalition of unions and social organizations led by the PCCH and the Broad Front) and the University Student Confederation (Confech) to "convoke a mass mobilization outside Congress" to pressure Piñera in support of a bill to reduce the working day, which it admitted is also designed to "flexibilize" and cheapen labor.

The leaders of the PCCH and Broad Front, which control the CUT, Social Unity and the Confech, initially responded to the mass protests triggered by the transit fare hike by criminalizing them as "unjustifiable vandalism." This generated outrage as workers were increasingly intervening through marches and strikes.

The PTR, while rhetorically glorifying the spontaneity of the protests, worked to channel them behind the PCCH and Broad Front. On October 18, it stated: "The organizations of the left, particularly the Communist Party and Broad Front, not only have the minimum duty of opposing the measure and convoking a struggle against it, but given their parliamentary weight and their mass organizations, they have the responsibility to call a national strike against this attack."

The CUT called for a general strike and other mobilizations but only after acknowledging that they were inevitable and could only be contained by the union apparatus asserting control.

Since protests only grew larger, the Broad Front, the PCCH and the PTR all began calling for Piñera's resignation and the establishment of a Constituent Assembly.

A November 4 editorial by *El Mostrador*, a Chilean paper aligned with the official "left," called for "prompt agreements" and, while opposed to Piñera's ouster, stressed that a new Constitution was "indispensable." It explained that "the burning question" was to restore "faith that the system will finally rectify itself and give solid and credible responses."

The paper went on to argue that such a constitutionalist approach would ward off "the possibility of feverish authoritarian solutions." Workers need only remember that the Popular Front government (called Unidad Popular) led by Salvador Allende made similar assurances even as Washington and the Chilean military were openly orchestrating the military coup on September 11, 1973 that would bring Pinochet to power.

Moreover, the virtual silence in European and US ruling circles and the media over the military repression in Chile and the recent praise by Donald Trump for Piñera's "restoring order" and countering "foreign efforts" demonstrates that the ruling class everywhere is preparing for dictatorship.

Social Unity has criminally sought to cover up the deadly dangers by claiming a Constituent Assembly is needed "to change the economic model." However, the PTR has endeavored only to bolster their lies.

In a piece titled "What type of Constituent [Assembly] is needed and how to impose it: a debate with the PC and the Broad Front," the PTR calls the Constituent Assembly "a 'parliamentary' experience for workers and popular sectors ... that could lead them to conclude that a workers' government is needed to break with capitalism and implement profound socioeconomic changes in Chile."

Amid casual references to "self-organization," the PTR has also lamented that this process has "lacked the participation or deliberation of the rank and file in each organization within Social Unity," so it proposes "building assemblies, coordinating groups and committees." The PTR stresses: "We believe that the Roundtable of Social Unity must join this

call and promote rank-and-file assemblies in the organizations it leads.” In other words, these “rank-and-file” organizations are to be imposed from above by the same leaderships that are attempting to contain and betray the mass upsurge.

The co-leader of the successful 1917 Revolution in Russia, Leon Trotsky, warned in an article titled *The Growing Conflict*, written in March of that year, that the Provisional Government sought to “transform all the preparatory work of convening a Constituent Assembly” into efforts to re-install the Tsarist dictatorship overthrown in February.” He wrote:

“[I]mmediately, the revolutionary proletariat will have to set up its own revolutionary bodies, the Councils (Soviets) ... in opposition to the executive bodies of the Provisional Government. In this struggle, the proletariat must have as its direct goal the conquest of power, by uniting around itself the insurgent popular masses. Only a revolutionary workers’ government will possess the will and ability during the preparation of a Constituent Assembly to carry out a radical democratic cleansing in the country.”

Trotsky went on to spell out that this “radical democratic cleansing” would include the replacement of the existing army by a revolutionary militia, the winning of the peasant masses to the support of a revolutionary workers’ government and an internationalist, socialist struggle against war.

There is not a trace of this revolutionary conception of the demand for the Constituent Assembly as it raised by the Stalinists, the Broad Left and the PTR.

Today’s maneuvers by the Chilean Stalinists, whose roots lie in the nationalist and bureaucratic degeneration of the Communist International under Stalin, and their pseudo-left partners seek to prevent workers from drawing the necessary historical lessons.

Upholding the lessons from 1917, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) wrote a week after the 1973 coup in Chile: “In the epoch of the decline of capitalism—imperialism... [i]f the working class fails to create a revolutionary party and overthrow the state, then the transition to fascism and Bonapartism becomes inevitable.”

The ICFI added: “If in 1970-71 the military was unable to seize power and had to wait three years to execute its plans, we can say categorically that this was because it required the planned and systematic political disorientation carried out by Stalinism before the conditions were created for the coup.”

As the ruling class uses the promises of a Constituent Assembly to facilitate its turn toward authoritarianism, the PRT calls for “committees” controlled by the trade unions and bourgeois parties like the PC and Broad Front. Its hostility to any genuinely independent mobilization of the working class in the struggle for social equality reflects the outlook and interests of the trade union bureaucracy and layers of the upper-middle class.

For decades, their role has been to enforce the conditions required to attract globalized finance capital. The 2019 Wealth Report of Credit Suisse reports that, since 2010, the number of dollar millionaires in Chile grew more than 12-fold, from 5,000 to 65,000, while those with more than US\$100,000 in wealth jumped from 2.9 percent to 9 percent of Chileans.

Trade union officials belong to these privileged layers, with some competing for still higher paid positions, and have every material interest in keeping the social upsurge under control, seeing it as a threat to continued capital accumulation and to the privatizations and deregulation begun under Pinochet that enhanced it.

Just as the pro-capitalist and nationalist nature of the trade unions has attracted layers dedicated to betraying workers for a living, it is the fundamentally nationalist and pro-capitalist outlook and history of the PTR that has anchored it within these treacherous layers and the affluent middle class more broadly.

The PTR belongs to the so-called Trotskyist Fraction-Fourth International (FT-CI) led by the Socialist Workers Party (PTS) in Argentina. “Trotskyism” for the FT-CI refers to the revisionist movement created by Michel Pablo in 1953 in a break with the perspective of the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky in opposition to Stalinism. Pablo claimed that the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow (which killed Trotsky in 1940) and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist leaders in the colonial and semi-colonial countries could become “natural Marxists” and revolutionaries in response to the pressure of objective events. Thus, Trotskyists no longer needed to build a revolutionary party in the working class, but instead should integrate themselves into the existing bureaucracies and nationalist movements.

The FT-CI is a split-off from the movement founded by the Argentine Nahuel Moreno. In 1953, Moreno joined the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) when it broke with Pablo; however, within less than a decade he and the Chilean Workers Revolutionary Party (POR) adapted themselves politically to the ongoing radicalization of the nationalist petty bourgeoisie.

The 1959 Cuban Revolution led Moreno and the POR to openly accept Pablo’s positions and leave the ICFI in 1963. They claimed, and the FT-CI still does, that Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, petty-bourgeois nationalists who led a guerrilla movement, had built a workers’ state without the need for the conscious revolutionary intervention of the working class, much less the building of a Marxist party to lead it.

While promoting Castroism, Moreno also adapted to the Argentine bourgeois nationalist Juan Domingo Perón and to the Peronist trade unions, calling upon them to raise the “nationalist and popular banner ... as the only national solution to the country’s political crisis of a Constituent Assembly.” In 1965, the Chilean POR liquidated itself into a Castroite organization, the Left Revolutionary Movement (MIR), which, despite not joining Allende’s Unidad Popular, toed the line of Castro and the Stalinist bureaucracy of providing “critical” support to Allende’s bourgeois government.

In Chile as in Argentina, where the Peronist government was overthrown in 1976 by another US-backed fascist military coup, Pabloism blocked workers from advancing an independent struggle against the national bourgeoisie and imperialism and set the stage for defeat. Today, the Pabloite PTS in Argentina and PTR in Chile are advancing the same nationalist program aimed at channeling the revolutionary struggle of the working class behind the Peronist and Stalinist trade unions.

Workers across Chile and internationally must build new organizations, rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves, in every factory, workplace, school and working-class community. These must be built independently of and in opposition to the existing trade unions and political parties, not imposed from above by them, as envisioned by the Morenoites.

The struggle of the working class in Chile, as in every other country in the world, can be waged successfully only on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program that unites workers across national boundaries in a coordinated struggle against a globally integrated capitalist system.

This requires, above all, the building of Marxist-Trotskyist parties in the working class in Chile and throughout Latin America as national sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)