

José Antonio Kast: Chile's left paves the way for a fascist

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A barely veiled conspiracy is afoot in Chile. Against the working class and youth, the venal, authoritarian and rabidly anti-Communist Chilean ruling class is amassing the forces of the counterrevolution. This is the significance of fascist presidential candidate José Antonio Kast traveling to United States at the beginning of December. There he met with American businessmen, Trump supporter Senator Marco Rubio, the Council of the Americas, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Dialogue at which representatives from international organizations and companies were present.

Very little has been revealed as to the content of the discussions. The spin is that the visit's purpose was to evince a "more centrist agenda," as Chile's business paper *Diario Financiero* put it. It can be safely surmised that Kast's trip was to receive the blessing of his imperialist masters. Two of the dozens of business executives Kast met with are United Health Group, a health insurance company with a large stake in Latin America, and PepsiCo.

In an observant article in the liberal *El Mostrador*, Gonzalo Neira commented that the presence of PepsiCo brought to mind "the infamous collaboration of Donald Mcintosh Kendall, former Pepsi Cola CEO in the 1970s, who held several meetings with the late businessman Agustín Edwards Eastman (owner of *El Mercurio*), as part of the plot to overthrow the government of Salvador Allende."

The American trip is one of a series of gatherings that Kast, long-time admirer of military dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet, has held in the last period with renowned putschists.

This past week, Leopoldo López of the extreme right-wing CIA-funded Venezuelan party, Popular Will, visited Chile to hold discussions with the candidate, the Independent Democratic Union (UDI), a party created Pinochet's civilian aides, Evópoli, National Renewal and other rightist parties.

López is a scion of one of Venezuela's most aristocratic families, with close connections with right-wing regimes in South America and the US State Department. A fugitive from Venezuelan justice for spearheading destabilization missions and coup and assassination attempts against the bourgeois nationalist regime of President Nicolás Maduro, López was granted unconditional refuge in Spain last year by the Podemos-PSOE government. Traveling from there, he has met with Colombia's right-wing president Iván Duque, Ecuadorian right-wing president Guillermo Lasso, Peruvian ex-presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of imprisoned Peruvian dictator Alberto Fujimori, and Florida Republican senator and Trump sycophant, Rick Scott.

Kast has also been in close discussions with Brazil's fascist president, Jair Bolsonaro. Following the first-round vote, Bolsonaro's son Eduardo congratulated Kast on making it to the second ballot. "Kast is a patriot, well connected internationally and a stone in the shoe of the Sao Paulo Forum," Bolsonaro Jr. tweeted, referring to the organization that brings together Latin American bourgeois nationalists, national reformists and the pseudo-left.

Eduardo Bolsonaro, a congressman working towards mobilizing Brazil's corrupt and murderous police as shock troops, partook in the unprecedented US coup attempt of January 6 as an observer for Brazilian fascists. He is a critical link between a band of Brazilian putschists and Trump and his American and international far right acolytes. Like father like son, Eduardo glorifies the bloody military dictatorship that ruled Brazil for 21 years.

Another of Kast's collaborators is Santiago Abascal, leader of the Spanish Vox. Abascal also tweeted "Congratulations and forward!" following Kast's victory. Vox's Jorge Buxadé said that Kast's vote represented "the defence of the homeland, the family, the law and freedom" claiming that Chile was "seriously threatened" by "crime, drug trafficking and communism."

Vox is an openly fascist party with links to retired and active Francoists in the Spanish officer corps and retired generals who threatened last year to "start shooting 26 million sons of bitches," i.e., the electorate that voted for the pseudo-left Podemos-PSOE government. Abascal has travelled to the US and Latin America to erect an international anti-communist alliance known as the "Madrid Forum."

This rabble forms part of an international cabal of right-wing extremists preparing the counterrevolution against the coming mass struggles of the international working class. Part of the anti-communist alliance's gambit is to lie on a big scale, attributing to the struggle for socialism all the methods employed historically by the putschist and conspiratorial right.

In line with this, Kast proposes to create an "International Anti-Radical Left Coordination" that aims to work with other Latin American governments to "identify, arrest and judge radicalized agitators." The continuity with Operation Condor, the vast intelligence operation hatched by US-backed military regimes in Latin America in the 1970s to hunt down and murder political opponents, is unmistakable.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is alone in warning of the growing threat of dictatorship that is emerging internationally, and for a second time in half a century in Chile. And it is alone in exposing the criminal role of the Chilean left, which is making every effort to deceive the masses on how to defeat the authoritarian threat.

The political descendants of the forces that bore responsibility for straitjacketing the working class ahead of the September 11, 1973 coup d'état—Salvador Allende, Carlos Altamirano and the Socialist Party, Luis Corvalán and the Stalinist Communist Party, Miguel Enriquez and the Revolutionary Left Movement and the Pabloite revisionists, most notably Luis Vitale and Humberto Valenzuela—are today playing the same role. The deeply discredited parliamentary center-left, the Stalinist Communist Party, the pseudo-left Frente Amplio, the corporatist trade unions and the Pabloites have in chorus recycled time-worn national-exceptionalist platitudes encouraging illusions in the Chilean democratic process that are at odds with lived experience.

To stop the right, they insist, Gabriel Boric, presidential candidate of the pseudo-left-Stalinist coalition, must be elected to power. Only this will

guarantee safeguarding the Constitutional Convention, which purportedly will further reinforce democracy once Pinochet's authoritarian charter is repealed. They've been able to convince musicians, celebrities, academics and a spate of other middle class figures to sign on to this pernicious and deceptive campaign.

The current situation is all the more dangerous two years after colossal anti-capitalist demonstrations shook the foundations of the country. Despite extreme social polarization and political instability, the working class lacks an independent political leadership that is able to provide it a thought-out perspective and strategy, while the bourgeoisie is well advanced in mapping out its own solution to its crisis of rule.

Since millions took to the streets at the end of 2019 against Piñera's state of emergency and his deployment of the murderous Chilean military and special forces, the ruling class has been preparing to deal with the increasingly militant and rebellious workers and youth. It has had at its disposal the old bureaucratic apparatuses and the pseudo-left agencies to divert and suppress the struggles of Chilean workers while it builds up the repressive forces of the state and poisons public opinion with anti-immigrant xenophobia and by vilifying all social protest as "delinquency," "vandalism" and "terrorism." Meanwhile fascists, paramilitary organizations and other criminal mafias with links to the police and the military are being emboldened by the political impasse.

A police-state framework already exists in Chile. Over the last three years, the National Intelligence Agency has been revamped to combine military, security and public order divisions, permitting vast intelligence-gathering operations. Military forces have been deployed to the indigenous zones in the south to conduct policing operations as a precursor for their use nationally; and the northern perimeters of the country bordering Bolivia, Argentina and Peru are under heavy military and police patrol and surveillance.

Kast's #Dare program

The Kast family is not unknown in Chile. José Antonio is the son of Michael Kast, a Nazi officer who participated in Operation Barbarossa, Hitler's genocidal war against the Soviet Union. He somehow miraculously survived that campaign fleeing via Italy to Argentina and finally settling in southern Chile to establish a restaurant chain. José Antonio and a number of other siblings are equally committed to their father's world view.

According to a report by the news site *Resumen* this month, Christian Kast "participated in interrogations in Paine after the military coup of 1973. Miguel, in addition to his positions as Secretary of State and at the Central Bank, worked as an advisor to the DINA (secret police)..." and "several testimonies indicate that the imprisoned peasant leaders were transported in trucks of 'Baviera', a company founded by the Kast family in Paine, to (Pinochet's) extermination camps."

José Antonio (55) won a seat in the lower house in 2001 as a candidate of the UDI but resigned from that party claiming it was too centrist. He ran as an independent candidate in the 2017 presidential elections on a law and order and anti-immigrant platform, obtaining 7.9 percent of votes. In the following year he founded his own political party, Republican Action, changing the name to Republican Party in 2019 as an homage to Donald J. Trump.

Kast's presidential campaign and his "#Dare" program are a clarion call to the most reactionary milieu, retired and active generals and officer corps, sections of the clergy and Christian fundamentalists, Pinochetista diehards, xenophobes, anti-egalitarians, authoritarians, ultra-nationalists, neoliberals and neoconservatives to coalesce around the Christian Social

Front as a bulwark against communism.

Kast's program appeals to layers of the ruined lower middle classes, particularly in the enormous so-called informal sector. This includes shopkeepers and owners of small and medium-size family businesses who have had to eat into their pension savings to survive during COVID-19 and are clamoring for a return to a pre-pandemic normal.

Feeding on their already existing anxieties, he directs the middle classes against the struggle for social equality by criminalizing the demands of workers and youth as the product of "foreign interference" by imagined "narco-terrorist" organizations that want to destroy "social peace."

In the face of this supposed social chaos, Kast promises to personally save Chile with law and order and an iron hand:

What I am going to do is to dedicate myself, body and soul, to fight crime, drug trafficking and terrorism and to use all available resources and all the strengths of our police forces to prosecute, judge and punish these crimes and make Chile a calm, peaceful and free place again... When we say everything, we mean everything... We say it with pride. We are not afraid of the military and nobody should be; on the contrary: I am proud of the Armed Forces and I am sure that together with them we will recover Araucanía and if necessary, we will recover all the places in Chile that need more authority and order to fight crime and organized drug trafficking.

What follows in his #Dare program is a commitment to destroy whatever controls exist over the repressive arm of the state. The first main plank in his crusade against communism is to do away with international and national human rights bodies having any oversight on policing, beginning with the UN Human Rights Council and the International Labor Organization among others.

Kast proposes to disband the current National Human Rights Institute (INDH) and to put in its place another body to uphold the rights of state agents, assuring their impunity in use of force against the population. The INDH will be transformed into an adjunct of the state apparatus working as an informant on citizens who commit "aggressions against police" and vandalism.

Point 46 of the program proposes to extend the powers of the State of Emergency in which the president is granted "the power, along with restricting freedom of movement and assembly, to intercept, open or search documents, and all kinds of communications and arrest people in their own homes or in places that are not prisons or intended for detention." Point 19 states that "Carabineros, the PDI [Investigations Police of Chile] and members of the Armed Forces should be empowered to use the necessary force to re-establish Public Order and the Rule of Law." Regulations and protocols must be established so state agents are not "judged for having made an excessive use of (force) judicially or administratively."

Against the indigenous populations in the south, Kast proposes to enhance the powers of the infamous Anti-Terrorism Law allowing undisclosed "special investigation techniques," the use of undercover agents, controlled deliveries and protected witnesses.

Kast also proposes to create a new police unit modelled on the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) unit to be unleashed against immigrants and refugees. Legal protections of the right to asylum will be rescinded allowing for unrestricted expulsions. Any social or civil groups that offer assistance, guidance or refuge to "illegal" immigrants will face sanctions and prosecution.

The program aims to further expand an already vast intelligence network. Kast proposes to establish a permanent National Security

Committee to meet weekly in La Moneda Palace dedicated solely to “the fight against Terrorism, Drug Trafficking and Crime.” It would receive reports from a Superior Intelligence Council that would oversee the work of the National Intelligence Agency that brings together intelligence bodies from the three branches of the Armed Forces, Carabineros and the PDI. Kast also proposes to create a new Police Intelligence Agency to systematize information and create a common database with the use of technologies such as Big Data and biometric recognition.

Through the ballot box, Kast proposes a police state and authoritarian regime.



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