

Chile's pseudo-left president-elect Gabriel Boric promises to work with far right

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Celebrations erupted across Chile beginning on Sunday night as it became clear that Gabriel Boric, the pseudo-left former student protest leader and candidate of the Frente Amplio electoral coalition, had defeated the far-right candidate José Antonio Kast of the Christian Social Front by a wide margin.

With 99.9 percent of the ballots counted, 4.62 million (or 55.8 percent) went to Boric, the highest number of votes cast for any candidate since the return to civilian rule in 1990. He placed first in 11 of the country's 16 districts. In the working class communes of Santiago, like La Pintana, Puento Alto, San Ramon, La Granja, the vote for Boric surpassed 70 percent of the electorate. The fascistic José Antonio Kast of the Christian Social Front received 3.65 million votes, or 44.15 percent.

Participation of eligible voters increased by 1.2 million compared to the first round ballot in November, when Kast placed first and Boric second. Sunday's second-round election established another record, with the largest number of ballots cast in the republic's history—8.63 million, or 55.65 percent of all eligible voters.

The masses of people who streamed into La Alameda, the main avenue of Santiago and the hundreds of thousands who took to the streets across the country were celebrating what they perceive as a victory against fascism and an advance for the struggle against social inequality, poverty and repression that gave rise to demonstrations of millions in 2019.

Crowds chanted “*El Pueblo Unido Jamás Será Vencido!*” (“The people united shall never be defeated!”) the anthem of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government, brought to power in 1970 as part of an international revolutionary wave of the working class, and toppled by the US-backed coup of September 11, 1973.

The tragic experience of Chile exposed the lie of that slogan. The people—meaning Chileans of all social classes—could not then, and cannot now, be united because of the objective existence of irreconcilable class interests under capitalism. That dangerous myth was a cornerstone of the national reformist Allende government, which used the term “people” as a means of burying the interests of the working class.

The Stalinist Communist Party was most vociferous in advancing the idea. The armed forces and the Carabineros were the “people in uniform,” privileged layers of the middle class and even the so-called progressive bourgeoisie were part of the “people.” This reactionary theory was connected to that of a two-stage revolution and the bankrupt concept of a “peaceful

parliamentary road to socialism” through Popular Fronts.

The fact that this idea was exploded with the fascist-military coup that overthrew Allende's Popular Unity government, and led to the murder, disappearance and torture of tens of thousands, has not stopped the same forces from promoting these discredited and reactionary conceptions today.

Far from unity, social and class tensions will be raised to a fever pitch under a Boric government.

The coming to power of the pseudo-left Frente Amplio and the Stalinist Communist Party has raised immense expectations among increasingly radicalized workers, students and youth. Only two years ago, beginning in October 2019, anti-capitalist marches and demonstrations erupted across Chile, involving at one point half the country's population and lasting for months.

This transformative experience expressed the conscious attempt by the masses to articulate grievances accumulated over decades against entrenched social inequality, poverty wages and starvation pensions, a crippled public health and education system, burgeoning student and household debt, rampant police and military violence, criminalization of social protests, suppression of indigenous demands, and nepotism, corruption and graft at all levels of the state.

Popular expectations will be quickly dispelled by the incoming government. Boric had already shifted the axis of his platform to the right during the campaign, picking up talking points on “security” and other issues from the playbook of his fascistic opponent.

Moreover, corporate and financial capital will “make the economy scream” if any measures come into conflict with their stronghold over Chile. Already, the upper echelons of society are transferring their personal wealth overseas.

“More than \$50bn has been moved out of Chile since October 2019 as the wealthy shift assets abroad, according to a central bank official,” reported the *Financial Times* last Thursday. “Bond issuance on local markets has all but dried up after the pension withdrawals and Boric's pledge to dismantle the private pension system, making Chile one of the biggest Latin American debt issuers on international markets this year.”

The Santiago stock market closed 6.8 percent down on Sunday, while the dollar rose to record levels. The US-based investment bank JPMorgan responded to the election by declaring that “the market will need rapid signals of real moderation” in order to “minimize risk.” Similarly, the Wall Street ratings agency

Moody's declared that "government policies that improve the confidence of businesses and investors will be fundamental to supporting solid growth backed by solid private investment," while predicting that "Boric will have to lower the tone of his spending proposals to preserve fiscal stability."

To appease the financial markets and the transnational corporations, Boric will have to quickly drop any pretense of implementing social measures that require a substantial commitment of resources and to proceed with a pro-business program. He will inevitably be compelled to unleash repression when his government's program clashes with the unfulfilled expectations of the masses, a move that can only embolden the extreme right.

He made his right-wing course explicitly clear in his first address as president-elect before a mass rally in Santiago Sunday night.

"The future of Chile needs all of us on the side of the people and I hope that we have the maturity to count on [the right-wing opposition's] ideas and proposals to start my government," he told his audience. "I know that beyond the differences we have in particular with José Antonio Kast, we know how to build bridges so that our compatriots can live better."

Boric's mention of the name of his opponent, the far right defender of the crimes of Pinochet's 17-year fascist military dictatorship and the son of an ex-Nazi Wehrmacht officer, provoked loud booing from the crowd, to which he responded, "Yes, [we need] José Antonio Kast too!" to build democracy. He had held a private meeting with the extreme rightist that same evening in a Santiago hotel room.

He emphasized his commitment to work with the right "which means both an invitation and an obligation to dialogue. I honestly see it as an opportunity to meet again, to unite in great deeds for the good of our country to achieve broad and lasting agreements..." Any changes, he said would have to be "step-by-step, gradual."

Boric has a proven record of defending private property relations and upholding the capitalist market. A radical university student leader in the 2011 education protests, he has since 2014 sat in the lower house of the Chilean Congress, lending at critical moments support to the government of the day.

In 2019 he infamously entered into national unity talks with the right-wing government of billionaire President Sebastian Piñera to head off the massive anti-capitalist demonstrations. He then proceeded to support "in general" draconian and anti-democratic laws that have permitted the criminalization of all forms of protest.

The outgoing Piñera was not about to return the favor. Sunday's election was marred by heavy-handed attempts by the Piñera government to disenfranchise large swathes of working class communities. Early in the day, independent media reported that the government was operating the public transport system at only 50 percent capacity. Citizens from across the Metropolitan Region, with its close to 9 million inhabitants, turned to social media to denounce the government for disrupting the election, as dozens of working class communes across the country had to mobilize their own means to get to the polls, and an untold number weren't able to exercise their right to vote.

Minister of Transport and Telecommunications, Gloria Hutt, denied government intervention, but bus drivers revealed to the

media that the private commercial bus companies were operating on a Sunday timetable with 50 percent or less the number of vehicles for a usual workday.

The pseudo-left Frente Amplio and the Stalinist Communist Party, the political tendencies directly impacted by this thoroughly anti-democratic intervention into the election process, limited themselves to criticizing the government. Izkia Siches, who left the presidency of the Medical Association to head Boric's campaign tweeted, "before the operation of @GobiernodeChile to limit public transport in favor of its candidate, we call to organize cabs, buses and shared cars to transport voters."

They then buried what was a significant attack on the democratic right to vote as it became clear within half an hour of the polls closing that Boric had won by a sweeping majority.

Boric's government will be modeled in large measure on Spain's Podemos-Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) coalition, composed of thoroughly corrupt, pro-capitalist stooges who are willing to downplay the threat of a military coup just to keep the working class politically demobilized. Just this last week they unleashed riot police against striking metalworkers in Cádiz.

Like the Chilean coalition, Podemos, with which Boric maintains intimate political ties, is promoted as "left," but there is absolutely nothing left-wing about it. Rather it is a pseudo-left outfit that speaks for self-obsessed upper-middle-class layers who wish only for a greater distribution of the wealth within the top 10 percent, along with positions of authority and political power for themselves.

The honeymoon with Boric will be short-lived. The Chilean working class will increasingly come into conflict with his right-wing policies from the moment he enters the La Moneda Palace.



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