

# Pseudo-left president takes office in Chile

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18 March 2022

The Frente Amplio-Communist Party coalition, Apruebo Dignidad, which won the second-round vote in the Chilean presidential election last December, assumed office on March 11 to much fanfare from the international bourgeoisie.

They see in the new ruling coalition a useful political instrument for suppressing the resurgence of the class struggle and the threat of social revolution that inevitably arises with global capitalism mired in rising inflation and economic shock therapy, dictatorship and war.

The Biden administration sent a presidential delegation to the inauguration. Biden had called then Chilean president-elect Gabriel Boric in December to discuss “their shared commitment to social justice, democracy, human rights...”; this while the US was bankrolling and training fascistic Ukrainian forces to provoke Russian President Vladimir Putin to war. Other imperialist powers intimately involved in the long-term strategy of undermining, isolating and making a pariah state of Russia—the EU, Canada, Japan—have also welcomed Boric’s ascendancy.

Of note was the Spanish delegation consisting of King Felipe VI and ministers of the PSOE-Podemos ruling coalition, a government of kindred political spirits with Apruebo Dignidad. Present was the Stalinist Yolanda Díaz, Spanish deputy prime minister. While originally posturing as an opponent of war, she has since supported sanctions against Russia and NATO’s supplying of armaments to Ukraine. Within Spain, PSOE-Podemos have unleashed police-state repression against striking workers and under their stewardship allowed over 100,000 to die of COVID-19, and another 5 million to get infected, all in the interests of defending Spanish capitalist profitability.

Also, the world’s major newspapers have proclaimed the positive significance of Chile’s new president. In what seems almost surreal, the *New Statesman*, *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Economist*, *Financial Times* and many others positively spin the pseudo-left government as “most radical,” “left-wing,” “progressive,” “feminist,” “inclusive,” “transformative” and a harbinger of “social change.”

The ostensibly left Argentine daily *Pagina 12* commented: “If Boric succeeds in advancing ... his example will transcend the borders of Chile itself. At a time when we are being bombarded by a relentless cascade of despairing news, a foundational model that offers hope in democracy and participation can inspire the world and especially young people.”

The *Financial Times*, the voice of the City of London, responded along similar lines: “Boric has a rare opportunity to show that Chile can again be a global trendsetter, this time by creating a fairer and greener society while preserving growth and

private investment. That could be a new model, for both Latin America and the developing world.”

The *Economist* referred to the Chilean pseudo-left’s breakneck alignment with imperialism: “Happily, Mr Boric gives every sign of being a democrat. He has condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as well as human-rights abuses in Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.”

*Le Monde* described the election of Boric as “undoubtedly the most important political event to happen in Latin America in 2021,” adding that his “task is to oversee a profound transformation of Chilean society, burying the neoliberal economic model and building a fairer, more inclusive country.”

The Chilean and international so-called left, in all its manifestations, is ecstatic. The *Guardian* captured the mood when it spoke to Luis Maira, 81, a former minister and apparently a mentor for the new president: “This is the best generation of young politicians Chile has had in 50 years... Without a shadow of a doubt, Boric is leading us into a new chapter of Chilean history.”

“Make no mistake—this is the official inauguration of one of the world’s most feminist governments ever,” gushed the *UK Independent* adding that “In a country that celebrated its first gay marriage last Thursday, the pace of change is dizzying.”

This is indeed a victory, but only for a particularly privileged and affluent strata of the middle class made up of professionals, civil servants, the trade union apparatus, functionaries, university academics. The election actualizes a redistribution of political power to the Chilean pseudo-left, previously held by a traditional center-left political caste that emerged four decades ago.

Like their Spanish counterparts, the Chilean pseudo-left is permeated with the politics of lifestyle, identity and self interest. It is utterly hostile to the political independence of the working class and revolutionary socialism. Boric in particular embodies a guiding precept of pseudo-leftism, using populist slogans and democratic phraseology to give himself a “progressive” veneer, as advanced by one of this tendency’s chief ideologists, Chantal Mouffe.

“What is urgently needed is a left populist strategy aimed at the construction of a ‘people,’ combining the variety of democratic resistances (which) does not require a ‘revolutionary’ break with the liberal democratic regime,” the Belgian academic explained in 2018. This describes Boric and the political forces in Apruebo Dignidad to a tee.

Boric was a student leader in radical protests, which erupted in 2011 against the extortionate cost of higher education and the ballooning of student debt. He was quickly co-opted into the state once elected to the lower house of the Chilean Congress, lending

at critical moments support to the government of the day.

Following the eruption of the largest anti-capitalist demonstrations at the end of 2019, Boric infamously entered into national unity talks with the beleaguered right-wing government of billionaire President Sebastian Piñera, and voted for the government's anti-democratic police state laws.

The national unity peace talks were used to dissipate the demonstrations and render them harmless. The pseudo-lefts and Stalinists appealed to their social base in the professional middle classes with the call to change the country's authoritarian constitution. Hundreds of lawyers, academics, and union apparatchiks raced to integrate themselves into the constitutional convention, drawing on their purported "progressive," "environmental," "indigenous" and "feminist" credentials to rewrite the country's charter.

While a section of the working class was enticed into supporting the parliamentary maneuver, anti-democratic laws that Boric voted for helped criminalize social protest and the struggles of radicalized working class youth. In the two years since the 2019 demonstrations, more than 8,000 mainly young people suffered some form of state violence, including sexual abuse and torture. Over 500 suffered eye injuries, and over 50 died at the hands of Carabineros and the Armed Forces.

Accompanying Boric in the new administration are fellow student leaders-cum-parliamentarians during the same period: Camila Vallejo (Stalinist Communist Party) as Minister General Secretariat of Government and Giorgio Jackson (Democratic Revolution) as Minister General Secretariat of the Presidency. The new Interior Minister, Izkia Siches (Communist Youth student leader in 2011), headed the Medical College during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have all accommodated themselves to the increasing turn toward a police state over the last three years, beginning with the state of emergency and the deployment of the military in the streets in response to the demonstrations.

In March 2020 the government seized on the COVID-19 pandemic to decree a state of emergency that lasted until September 2021, authorizing the security forces to control civilian movement and oversee a curfew. A state of emergency and the deployment of the military was again decreed in October 2021 in the south of Chile in response to land seizures by indigenous communities.

Piñera left office March 11 having implemented a key feature of the fascist presidential candidate Jose Antonio Kast's election platform. Amid an ongoing migration crisis that sparked anti-refugee demonstrations and a truck owners' strike, Piñera decreed a state of emergency militarizing four provinces in the northern region and financed the creation of a ditch on the border with Bolivia. In a move that demonstrates a continuity of policy, the pseudo-left government extended the state of emergency on March 17.

**Resurrecting the ghosts of the past**

Apruebo Dignidad has very consciously invoked the legacy of the Popular Unity government overthrown by Gen. Augusto Pinochet's 1973 US-backed coup.

"Boric's youthful, progressive, majority-women cabinet is inspired by the democratic socialism of Salvador Allende, Chile's first ever socialist leader," said *Le Monde*.

At his inauguration, Boric specifically referred to Allende's September 11, 1973 speech, delivered as Hawker Hunter jets bombed La Moneda palace, deliberately seeking to present himself as Allende's second coming:

"As Salvador Allende predicted almost 50 years ago, we are once again, compatriots, opening the great avenues through which free men, free men and free women, can pass in order to build a better society," he told an audience outside the presidential palace on Friday March 11.

For decades, the legend of the martyred president was a drawing card for the parliamentary left—the Socialist Party, the Party for Democracy, the Communist Party—as they implemented every dictate of finance capital since the return to civilian rule in 1991.

Under this center-left coalition, which mirrored in Chile global processes associated with the globalization of production, a vast concentration of wealth was amassed by the top 1 percent through the combined effects of social counterrevolution, the artificial suppression of the class struggle, the financialization of the economy and stock market boom and the return of US-led imperialist war and brigandage.

The 2019 demonstrations were a watershed moment because they revealed that illusions in the center-left were dead. The old political caste proved to be deeply despised as shown in the last election cycle where they suffered annihilation.

While the Communist Party has nowhere near the disastrous political sway it exerted over the Chilean working class 50 years ago, the politics of Apruebo Dignidad are aimed at providing a fresh veneer for Stalinism's reactionary nationalist theories.

At their center is the theory of the two-stage revolution that posits the subordination of the working class to Stalinism's alliance with the middle class and the "progressive bourgeoisie" in a bid to democratize the state and the republic through the bourgeois parliamentary process. The popular front politics founded upon this theory tragically guaranteed the paralysis of the insurgent working class during the 1970-1973 period, leading to its ultimate betrayal and bloody defeat.

As Chilean workers enter into a new wave of struggle, the decisive task they confront is forging their political independence in preparation for an inevitable confrontation with the capitalist state led by Apruebo Dignidad. This requires the building of a revolutionary party of the working class based on the principles of socialist internationalism which the International Committee of the Fourth International alone defends.



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