

# Chile votes on revamped Pinochet constitution

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Chileans went to the polls for the fourth time in four years Sunday, to vote on a pro-corporate, anti-democratic and authoritarian draft constitution whose framework was drawn up by the entire parliamentary political spectrum, from the Stalinist Communist Party and President Gabriel Boric's Broad Front to *Pinochetistas* and fascistic forces.

The corporate media, historically aligned with the most reactionary sectors, has gone into overdrive in a last-ditch effort to terrorize the population with an ostensible crime wave, into accepting a constitution that is more extreme than Gen. Pinochet's charter it is meant to replace.

In essence the only right the charter consecrates is the right of capitalists to private property and to accumulate profit from education, health, social services, pensions, water and every other sector of society. It enforces this right by strengthening the police state and a military empowered to intervene in domestic affairs. The existing limited rights to abortion, to strike and many other democratic rights are to be further curtailed.

The political outlook and statements of the ultra-right Republican Party, the political force with the most representation in the constitutional council elected to amend the draft, bear singling out. Councilor Luis Silva is a numerary of Opus Dei, the right-wing Catholic order tied to Gen. Franco's fascist regime in Spain that had disciples among Latin America's military juntas. If Silva could have his way he would establish a theocratic state, declaring recently that his "model is Jesus Christ."

The leader of the Republicans, another Opus Deist, is José Antonio Kast, son of a Nazi officer who fled to Chile after the defeat of Germany in World War II. *Resumen* established in 2021 that the family was deeply involved in the crimes of the Chilean Junta. "Several testimonies indicate that imprisoned peasant leaders were transported in trucks of 'Baviera', a company founded by the Kast family in Paine, to extermination camps," it reported.

Whether the draft constitution is rejected or approved, anti-democratic, fascistic, obscurantist and libertarian political tendencies have been strengthened. This is a direct result of the actions of the parliamentary, trade union and satellite pseudo-left forces.

To deflect attention from their critical role in creating these conditions, the "left" has sought to distance itself from the final draft in the lead up to the December 17 election. It has called for a "no" vote based on the claim that the right dominated the constitutional council proceedings and determined the character of the document. They are too modest, understating their own contribution.

The first important point to note is that authoritarian and police-state policies implemented under Boric's Apruebo Dignidad coalition are enshrined in the draft constitution, laws such as: retroactively applying legal protections granted to the military and Carabineros for using lethal force; the use of the military in public order functions including the protection of "critical infrastructure" and the protection of border areas.

Moreover, while the amendments belong almost exclusively to the right, the initial framework of the second draft consisting of 12 fundamental points was drawn up by a committee of unelected "experts" handpicked by Congress according to party representation. They remain intact.

This arrangement, pompously called the "Agreement for Chile," was proposed by President Boric and accepted by almost all the parties in

Congress last December, after the first draft was overwhelmingly rejected in elections held in September of last year.

Another election was held in May to pick 50 constitutional councilors, in which the center-left coalition was wiped out and President Boric's coalition won only 17 seats. The fascistic Republicans and the right garnered 33 of the 50 seats, giving them veto power over the constitutional process and the ability to approve and modify constitutional norms.

The present political situation, which forebodes immense dangers to the working class and the youth, is the end product of a four-year campaign initiated by the Chilean "left" to save a beleaguered political establishment which was on the brink of imploding. It faced its greatest crisis since the 1970s, when an international revolutionary movement of the working class threatened capitalist rule everywhere.

At that point, world capitalism was saved due to the treachery of the Stalinist and Social Democratic misleaders of the working class. In Chile this betrayal was consummated by the Communist and Socialist parties which formed the backbone of the Popular Unity government of President Salvador Allende. With the support of the Castro-Guevarist Left Revolutionary Movement (MIR), straitjacketed the working class to the capitalist state by sowing illusions in the military's supposed respect for the "inviolability" of the constitution, even as the putschist Chilean bourgeoisie, financed by their American imperialist backers, were openly preparing the coup d'état.

Five decades on, amid historic anti-capitalist demonstrations that shook Chile as part of the eruption of struggles of the working class across the globe, these same forces sought to divert politicized and radicalized workers and youth into a dead-end parliamentary charade.

A political division of labor was put in place to achieve this goal. In November 2019, as the murderous military and Carabineros were ruthlessly suppressing unarmed mass protests, Boric, the former student radical, participated in the right-wing Piñera administration's national unity talks that led to an "Agreement for Social Peace and a New Constitution" signed by all the parliamentary parties except for the Communist Party. The CP's feigned opposition was for public consumption.

Not long after the deal was sealed, the corporatist trade unions, controlled by the Communist Party, called off strikes in support of the mass demonstrations. This policy of suppressing all industrial action was continued through the next three years as the ruling class imposed the burden of the COVID-19 health crisis and the supply chain shock from the US-EU proxy war against Russia on to the backs to working class, through mass layoffs, wage freezes, cuts to spending and a soaring cost of living. When suppressing the class struggle proved impossible and workers broke out of their stranglehold, the union bureaucrats did their utmost to isolate the strikes and divert the rank and file into protest stunts outside Congress or some minister's office.

In effect the Communist Party-controlled unions consciously placed a wedge between the working class and the youth who were the predominant layer in the anti-capitalist marches. Once isolated, the parliamentary "left" aided the right-wing Piñera administration

(2018-2022) in beefing up the police state to intimidate the youth and criminalize all social protest.

The remainder of Piñera's government was marked by a frenetic law-and-order campaign directed against immigrants and indigenous communities and an increased reliance on Carabineros special forces and the military, all of which Boric has emulated.

It was in this polarized climate that Boric and Co. began to heavily promote the fraud that it was possible to transform Chile into a social reformist state "burying neoliberalism" by changing the constitution and by winning the 2021 presidential elections.

In October 2020, over 80 percent of the population voted in favor of a referendum to change Pinochet's constitution, kept in place for 30 years since the return to civilian rule.

In the May 2021 elections for the constitutional convention, the right and old center-left parties were reduced to a rump, while the pseudo-left, who promised to inscribe into the draft constitution the rights to public health, public education, a decent pension, an end to social inequality, and democratizing the state apparatus, won a two-third's majority.

In the December presidential elections, an all-out campaign was launched to promote the Communist Party-Broad Front electoral pact as the only means of preventing the coming to power of the Republican's candidate, the fascistic Jose Antonio Kast.

By the September 2022 election, when an overwhelming 62 percent of the population voted down the world's "most progressive" constitution, Boric had been in power for seven months. In that intervening period the ruling Stalinist-pseudo left coalition had shattered every expectation and illusion built up among workers, the middle class and the youth.

The social reforms it had promised in the lead up to the elections dissipated into thin air. Mario Marcel, Boric's finance minister and darling of the corporate and financial world, slashed government spending and increased interest rates to their highest level in four decades, amid 8 to 9 percent official unemployment and a 14 percent annual inflation rate. There were cases of people driving to neighboring Argentina to stock up on everyday items at a fraction of the cost.

Never actually intending to satisfy the pressing needs of the population, the Boric administration implemented a swathe of police-state laws and showered the police with funds and equipment to demonstrate the government's commitment to law and order and a strong hand against crime. It instituted a permanent state of exception in the south to repress the indigenous Mapuche population and imprisoned community leaders involved in land seizures and militant actions on trumped-up terrorism charges. It used the military to stop refugees entering the country across the Bolivian and Peruvian borders and began expelling undocumented migrants.

Not a week goes by in which a rally, protest or strike isn't met with violent police repression. Two weeks ago, the Education university was stormed by 200 special forces.

An interview that appeared in Bloomberg encapsulates in a nutshell the sentiment of millions of workers and broad sectors of the lower middle class.

"Katherine Astudillo, a 28-year-old mother of three, was ... hopeful in Boric's promises to fight inequality and redistribute wealth, but none of that has come to pass in her town: Putaendo is short of jobs and parts still lack access to basics like drinking water. Astudillo says she rents out rooms in her house and labors as a seasonal fruit worker to make ends meet. To top it off, she said she's increasingly worried about law and order. 'I regret voting for Boric,' Astudillo said. 'Crime is on the rise.'"

Lessons must be drawn from the experience of the Stalinists and the Broad Front in power.

In providing a balance sheet the *World Socialist Web Site* warned last March that "the Boric administration has within the space of a year proven itself to be among the most right-wing, pro-imperialist and anti-

working-class governments of the so-called Pink Tide in Latin America."

The WSWS explained further that their main function was to suppress the class struggle and to smother opposition to capitalism. Its constituent parts—the Communist Party, the Socialist Party-Party for Democracy, Boric's own political amalgam, the Broad Front—were all seasoned upper-middle-class agencies of the bourgeoisie whose real concern was to secure for itself a greater share of political power and of the wealth derived from the exploitation of labor.

To this must be added the pernicious role of the Morenoite organizations who profess to be Trotskyist but insist that the working class remain subordinated to the union bureaucracy and the Stalinists and Broad Front that control them. This perspective is advanced by the International Workers Movement (MIT), of the International Workers League-Fourth International (LIT-CI) and the Revolutionary Workers Party (PTR), of the Trotskyist Fraction-Fourth International (FT-CI) led by its Argentine section, both of whom have recently been given significant coverage by Chile's corporate media.

In their intervention into the Constitutional process both PTR and the MIT called upon the unions to jump out of their skins and conduct a struggle. At no point does building a revolutionary party come into their calculations, let alone the fight for socialist internationalism.

"[I]t is necessary that organizations such as the CUT (trade union confederation), CDP (Teachers Association) and CONFECH (high school student confederation) call assemblies in all places of work and study to establish coordination networks, actions and demands that will definitely not allow them to 'get away' with a constitution such as the one proposed, nor by trusting the same as always," wrote the PTR on December 9.

The MIT demands: "that the organizations of the working class and the youth, such as the CUT ... and the social movements build a list of demands and a plan of action to fight to improve our living conditions. The CUT and unions allied with the government must leave the negotiating tables with the ministers and prioritize the mobilization of the masses independently."

This subordination of the working class to the unions—which are not only organically opposed to socialist revolution but are today corporatized organizations subservient to capital—bears no connection whatsoever to socialism. Rather, this reactionary perspective is the culmination of breaking with basic Marxist principles and turning toward Stalinists, Social Democrats, petty-bourgeois nationalists and other non-proletarian social forces for leadership.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) is the only political organization that seeks to organize and unify the working class internationally in the struggle against capitalist exploitation, poverty and war. Its decades of struggle in defense of Marxist and Trotskyist principles embody a colossal political experience and the foundations of a thoroughly worked-out perspective to arm the working class for the present revolutionary epoch.

The decisive strategic question today is the building of the ICFI. We call on politically conscious workers, intellectuals and youth in Chile and internationally to study the perspective of the ICFI, the World Party of Socialist Revolution, and begin the process of building a section.



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