

Chilean fascists, emboldened by Trump and Boric government's appeasement, make headway in presidential race

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22 September 2025

Fascist supporters of former dictator Augusto Pinochet are forecast to win a second-round vote in Chile's elections scheduled for November and December. Jeannette Jara, the candidate of the incumbent fake left Socialist/Communist/Broad Front coalition is polling at just 30 percent. While Chilean pollsters are invariably unreliable due to their bias towards the right, the results are nonetheless an indictment of President Gabriel Boric, whose "progressivism" has only served to entrench Chile's long-standing extreme social inequality and strengthen authoritarian tendencies.

Global finance capital has made abundantly clear that the victory of political reaction is its preferred result. Chile's IPSA stock market index has rallied all this year in response to the forecast victory of the right-wing opposition, reaching 9,000 points for the first time ever in September.

This month JP Morgan reported that the likely opposition victory "seems to have been one of the drivers of the market's good performance in recent weeks and could continue to generate optimism in Chile." It added "optimism" would grow if the right won control of Congress: "This is because, in such a scenario, the orthodox macroeconomic policies presented by the two main right-wing candidates would likely have lower risks of execution and implementation."

By orthodox macroeconomic policies the finance giant is referring to sweeping cuts to public spending, a massive cull of public sector jobs and the imposition of a wage freeze, tax cuts for the rich, removing environmental protections to fast track mining and other projects and rule by emergency decree with the military on the streets, a la Donald J. Trump, and Argentina's Javier Milei. This is exactly what the three extreme right candidates; Evelyn Matthei of Chile Vamos, Republican Party candidate José Antonio Kast, and the National Libertarian Party's Johannes Kaiser, are promising.

The right wing has received wind in its sails from the election of Trump, who, from the moment he entered the White House earlier this year launched a violent counterrevolution against the working class and a declaration of war on the world. The US president's evisceration of fundamental constitutional and democratic principles as the whole oligarchy turns towards dictatorship has emboldened the most authoritarian political forces produced by the venal and reactionary Chilean ruling class.

Human rubbish in the service of capitalism and imperialism, from Opus Deist and evangelical obscurantists, to putschists, libertarians, fascists and neo-Nazis, these forces have coalesced to bring forward the offspring of mass murderers and war criminals as their candidates in the 2025 presidential elections.

Evelyn Matthei, daughter of a junta general

The candidate who is running for the extreme right coalition Chile Vamos is Evelyn Matthei, the septuagenarian daughter of the late Gen. Fernando Matthei who in 1978 became a member of Pinochet's military junta after the dismissal of Gen. Gustavo Leigh. At the time of the coup, Matthei ran the Air Force War Academy (AGA) which became a center for detentions, torture and executions.

In 2017, the human rights organization Corporación Humanas filed a suit charging Matthei with the crimes of kidnapping, torture, and sexual violence against Carmen Gloria Díaz, a 19-year-old militant of the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR). Diaz was kidnapped in December 1974 and held captive for two weeks at the AGA where she suffered rape, electric shocks to the genitals, and other horrific forms of torture.

In a communique issued in 2017, Corporación Humanas explained that "sexual violence against female detainees was a widespread and systematic practice during the civil-military dictatorship in Chile... Forced nudity, gang rape or rape by animals, violence against pregnant women, and forced abortions are some of the practices that repressive agents committed against women in almost all torture centers."

In another case, Sergio Barbo from the Brazilian investigative news site *Agência Pública* accessed recently declassified documents showing that the Brazilian biopharmaceutical research center, the Butantan Institute, supplied Chile's dictatorship with botulinum toxins—a bioweapon so potent that it takes only 75 nanograms to kill a person—that the regime then used to experiment on MIR political prisoners in 1981. The link with the Institute was made in a secret mission by Matthei and other high-ranking military personnel, as part of the Pinochet regime's bio-warfare program known as Project Andrea.

Death by poisoning was just one of the methods used by the southern cone military dictatorships to eliminate political opponents, its poisoned victims including Pablo Neruda, Frei Montalva, João Goulart, and Carlos Lacerda.

General Matthei died in 2017 before being brought to trial for his involvement in the military dictatorship and its crimes. His daughter's road to far-right politics was through National Renewal (Renovación Nacional) founded in 1987 by Sergio Onofre Jarpa, the parliamentary face of extra-parliamentary and paramilitary fascist organizations. The late Jarpa's activism goes back to the 1950s, when the Chilean Nazi's and national-syndicalists of the 1930s and 40's morphed into "respectable" parliamentary fronts. He joined the Agrarian Labor Party, then formed National Action and later the National Party all the while keeping very much alive the terrorist shock troops, reactivated in the late 1960's with the international revolutionary wave of working class struggle that brought to power the national reformist government of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1970.

When the 1973 imperialist-backed coup took place, these forces

seamlessly integrated into the Junta.

Matthei resigned from RN in 1992 amid a wire-tapping scandal involving her and Sebastián Piñera. She gravitated towards the more *Pinochetista* UDI. She joined it in 1999 during the arrest of Pinochet in London on charges of crimes against humanity. At the time, while Matthei and her ilk aggressively intervened to have the dictator returned to Chile, it was the plan hatched by the Socialist Party-Christian Democrat coalition in Chile with the government of Prime Minister Tony Blair that secured his release under cover of a dubious medical report that claimed he was unfit to stand trial for his countless crimes against humanity.

With the return to civilian rule, the corporate and international media assisted in concealing the origins and nature of these two extreme right parties, referring to them as the “traditional right” “liberal conservative” “center-right” opposition to the successive Socialist Party-Christian Democrat administrations that deepened Pinochet’s neo-liberal economic policies between 1991 and 2010.

A notable shift to the right across the entire political spectrum took place with Trump’s first electoral victory, which coincided with a deepening social, economic and political crisis and an international resurgence of the class struggle against social inequality that in Chile exploded to the surface in the massive protests of October 2019.

José Antonio Kast, son of a Nazi officer

This rightward shift was spearheaded by José Antonio Kast, the fascist candidate running in this year’s election.

Kast is a central figure in the international anti-communist organization, the Madrid Forum, founded by the leader of the Spanish fascist party Vox, Santiago Abascal. The group assembles the most reactionary political figures in Latin America and Europe including the Brazilian Eduardo Bolsonaro, the Peruvian Keiko Fujimori, Javier Milei and Victoria Villarruel from Argentina, the Venezuelan María Corina Machado and the Italy’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

José Antonio is also the son of the Nazi Wehrmacht officer Michael Kast, one of many Nazis who found refuge in Chile and the rest of Latin America via Europe’s railroads after they were resoundingly defeated by the Red Army.

Along with Walter Rauff, the Nazi SS bureaucrat responsible for the gas vans that killed hundreds of thousands of Eastern European Jews, and Paul Schäfer, the Nazi corporal and evangelical cult leader who escaped child sex abuse charges in post-war Germany and other Nazis, the Kasts enthusiastically greeted the US-backed 1973 military coup by actively assisting the regime in the mass round-up, torture and disappearance of political opponents.

According to a report republished by *Resumen* last August, José Antonio’s brother Christian “participated in interrogations in Paine [an agricultural town in Greater Santiago] after the military coup of 1973,” while his other brother Miguel “in addition to his positions as Secretary of State and at the Central Bank, worked as an advisor to the DINA (the National Intelligence Directorate, the Chilean Gestapo)...” *Resumen* continues, explaining that “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 won a seat in the lower house in 2001 as a candidate for the UDI, but after 16 years he resigned from that party claiming it was too centrist. In 2018 he founded Republican Action, changing the name to Republican Party in 2019 in homage to Donald J. Trump. He ran in the 2017 presidential election calling for the immediate and full-scale

expulsion of undocumented immigrants and a military-led law-and-order crusade. He upped the ante in 2021, promising to rule by emergency decree from the moment he came to power.

Kast lost both presidential elections, but his authoritarian program set the agenda of the last two administrations. This is because in between the two elections, the Chilean ruling class and its parliamentary servants were confronted with the months-long anti-capitalist demonstrations of 2019 involving millions of youth, workers and sections of the middle class that shook capitalist rule to its foundations. As the *World Socialist Web Site* recently explained:

This mass mobilization, part of an eruption of struggles of the working class across the globe, was an expression of pent-up opposition to the extreme free-market policies imposed by the military junta and intensified by the center-left and right-wing administrations following the transition to “democratic rule”. ... The sentiment of the millions involved was explicitly anti-capitalist and had been building up over decades in the form of significant social outbursts against the privatized education system, the two-tier health system, the miserable benefits provided by private pension funds and a multitude of other social grievances. The explosive character of the movement was moreover a response to the violence meted out by a murderous and lawless state apparatus *never* held accountable for the wholesale murder, torture and repression carried out under Gen. Augusto Pinochet’s 17-year dictatorship, not to mention the continuing crimes during civilian rule.

Late billionaire President Sebastian Piñera (2018-2022) responded by declaring “war” on the population, deploying the military and fast tracking a catalogue of police state bills. The remainder of his administration was spent on a repressive crackdown, smearing students as delinquents and criminalizing all manifestations of social opposition along with a filthy xenophobic campaign blaming desperate, newly arrived migrants and the poverty stricken Indigenous Mapuche communities for a supposed crime wave gripping the country.

Piñera could only proceed with this agenda because the Stalinist Communist Party, Boric’s Broad Front and their Morenista satellites worked might and main to smother the latent revolutionary situation of 2019 with cynical promises of social reforms if elected. This turned out to be a rude lie for the mass of the population, but especially the youth, the sick, the elderly, migrants and the indigenous communities, which represent the most vulnerable and oppressed sections of the working class.

All of the pseudo left government’s “signature” reforms are so miserable that they don’t take anyone out of poverty, let alone redistribute wealth: the minimum monthly wage increase to 530,000 pesos (approximately \$554 in current US dollars) remains below the poverty line threshold; the pension reform and the increase in the Universal Guaranteed Pension (PGU) to well below the poverty line 250,000 pesos (US\$261) will be available only to seniors aged 82 and over with the remainder of the 65-81 year olds receiving the payment over a ten year period! These non-reforms are cancelled out by three years of public spending austerity amid increases in the cost of living under conditions where the official unemployment rate is 9 percent and official youth unemployment is 22.3 percent.

Another signature reform, Copago Cero (zero co-payment for various procedures under public health), has turned out to be a sick joke. Almost 2.7 million people were waiting for medical care in the public system by the first quarter of 2025, representing an 8 percent increase over the same

period last year and the highest recorded number; the average wait time for surgeries not included in the Explicit Health Guarantees (GES) stood at 422 days. In another set of damning figures directly attributable to the outrageous waiting lists, 44,000 people died while waiting for care in the public health system in Boric's first year in office. In 2023, 34,500 people died and 36,260 lost their lives by September 2024.

The Boric administration will be remembered for having deployed the military against the civilian population on more occasions than any post-dictatorship civilian government, specifically targeting migrants and indigenous communities, and beefing up the state to the highest levels since the return to civilian rule 35 years ago.

The betrayal of the aspirations of a large cross-section of the population facing extreme hardship has helped create a climate where the most reactionary and backward sentiments can thrive, strengthening ultra-nationalist, militarist and xenophobic tendencies.



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