

Fascist admirer of Pinochet to assume presidency in Chile

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Chilean President Gabriel Boric welcomed his successor, President-elect José Antonio Kast of the fascist Republican Party, to La Moneda Palace in Santiago on Tuesday, initiating what he described as an “orderly and exemplarily transfer of power.”

Kast, a vocal admirer of the US-backed dictatorship that ruled Chile for 17 years, won a decisive victory in a presidential run-off held last Sunday, defeating Jeannette Jara of the Communist Party, the candidate of the ruling Unidad por Chile coalition. Running on the most right-wing platform of any candidate since the return to civilian rule in 1990, Kast worked relentlessly to whip up xenophobic anti-Venezuela, anti-immigrant chauvinism while pitching a law-and-order agenda.

Kast won 7,254,850 votes (58.2 percent), far outstripping Jara’s 5,218,444 (41.8 percent). The results were almost a reverse of the last presidential run-offs in 2021, when the ex-student radical Gabriel Boric soundly defeated Kast.

Jara failed to win any of Chile’s 16 regions, and only 34 out of its 346 communes. These “victories,” 13 in the north’s mining and working class communes and 21 in working class communes of Santiago’s Metropolitan Region, were only by small margins. She did not win a single commune in the southern regions of O’Higgins, Maule, Biobío, Araucanía, Los Ríos, Los Lagos, Aysén or Magallanes.

The markets and corporate media were both ecstatic over the results, with Chile’s IPSA stock market index reaching 10,315 points after a record high of 9,000 in September.

El Mercurio online said that the election was “well received by the main international investment banks, which agreed that the result reinforces political stability and opens up a favorable scenario for the markets, in line with a pro-growth economic program.” It referred to JPMorgan highlighting the reduction “of corporate tax, the cut in fiscal spending, and the streamlining of investment permits ... as key factors in improving the business climate and attracting foreign investment.”

The arch-conservative newspaper also reported that the president-elect would travel with his economic adviser, Jorge Quiroz, and the presidents of the Confederation of Production and Commerce, Susana Jiménez, and Federation of Chilean Industry, Rosario Navarro, to meet with Argentina’s fascist President Javier Milei.

Kast is planning a social counterrevolution, targeting first the most vulnerable sector of the population, some 337,000 irregular migrants and refugees who fled the social, political and economic catastrophes afflicting Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti and other parts of Latin America.

Kast’s “Border Shield” program promises to build five-meter-high electric fences and three-meter-deep trenches along the borders while increasing the presence of the Armed Forces. “We are going to close our borders,” he threatened during the campaign. “We are going to build detention centers. We are going to apply tough measures so that they cannot work, so that they no longer receive subsidies, so that they cannot send resources abroad.”

He is also proposing cuts to public spending of US\$6 billion in the first

18 months and US\$21 billion by the end of his four-year term, equivalent to roughly 8 percent of GDP. Like Milei, he is proposing to merge and eliminate ministries and public services to “reduce bureaucracy” and apply a “zero-based budget,” requiring every department to justify its annual spending. His economic team proposes to lower corporate taxes from the current 27 percent to as low as 20 percent, while introducing even greater “flexibility” into a labor market predominantly composed of casualized and temporary hires to “reactivate private investment.”

This will inevitably produce a social explosion. One of Kast’s spokespersons, and current senator-elect for La Araucanía, Rodolfo Carter, admitted as much in a recent interview: “... we are obviously not going to disclose (budget cuts) because they would paralyze the country the next day. It’s clear that if you say ‘I’m ending program X,’ that program will be shut down. We’ll have riots in the streets, the streets will be on fire.”

Kast is promising to rule by emergency decree from day one. The *Economist* wrote on November 12: “His plans for security are pure mano dura (“iron fist”): tougher sentences and maximum-security prisons, with hardened criminals isolated. ... Mr Kast also proposes to send soldiers to seal the border and patrol gangster strongholds. This is controversial, given Chile’s history of military dictatorship.”

The US-backed 1973 coup that brought Gen. Augusto Pinochet to power resulted in the detention, torture, execution and disappearance of tens of thousands of workers, students, peasants, intellectuals and left-wing political opponents. More than 1,200 remain “missing.”

But the violent repression and outright crimes committed by the forces of repression did not end with the restoration of civilian rule in 1990. Pinochet’s State Security Law and his anti-terrorist laws have been applied against different sections of the working class by successive governments of the civilian political caste. During the months-long anti-capitalist upsurge at the end of 2019, President Sebastián Piñera imposed a state of emergency that left 36 dead, hundreds mutilated and thousands detained and tortured in the ensuing mass sweeps.

Kast, the son of a Nazi German officer who escaped to Chile via the so-called Vatican “rat line” after World War II and whose family collaborated in the Pinochet dictatorship’s repression, has publicly supported Carabineros accused of emblematic human rights violations during 2019, and has close ties to the military junta’s butchers like Miguel Krasnoff who is serving a sentence of 1,047 years for torture, kidnapping and disappearances. Kast’s championing of these repugnant forces is not merely symbolic, he is indicating what “rule by emergency decree” means.

Kast secured the blessing of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio who on his X account said he looked forward to “partnering with his administration to strengthen regional security and revitalize the trade relationship,” a clear reference to Washington’s preparations to invade oil-rich Venezuela as part of much broader plans to secure unfettered control over the resources of the entire Western Hemisphere, while denying them

to its European and Chinese economic rivals.

The accommodation with US imperialism has been prepared by Boric, who served as Washington's attack dog in South America, speaking at international forums to attack Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua as authoritarian dictatorships.

Kast has received the support of the *Pinochetista* Independent Democratic Union leader Evelyn Matthei, daughter of the late Gen. Fernando Matthei, a member of Pinochet's military junta and head of the Air Force War Academy, which became a center for detentions, torture and executions. Kast has also received the backing of Milei's Chilean sycophant, the Libertarian Johannes Maximilian Kaiser Barents-von Hohenhagen.

These forces espouse the most reactionary ideologies spawned by parasitic capitalism in its death agony, mixing extreme individualism, irrationalism and subjective idealism with medieval religious mysticism and obscurantism and visceral anti-communism. The logic of Kast's politics leads inexorably to the worst crimes committed by his father and mentor. The working class in Chile, Latin America and internationally faces immense dangers.

Both Jara and Boric congratulated Kast on his victory. "President-elect, in everything that is good for Chile, you will find my support. In everything that could set us back, you will find firm, democratic, and responsible opposition," Jara said. "I don't want a divided country," she added, assuring that her sector will always act through institutional channels and condemn any form of violence.

Sounding the alarm and politically arming the working class is anathema to the Chilean "left" today even more so than in the past.

When the Chilean working class and youth were at the forefront of the international revolutionary upsurge of the masses caused by the global capitalist crisis in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, the Chilean Communist Party had long since abandoned the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and been transformed into a counterrevolutionary agency of capitalism within the workers' movement.

The Popular Unity government—the Communist and Socialist parties, the trade union bureaucracies, the Christian Left, MAPU and the Revolutionary Left Movement—which came to power in October 1970 on the back of radicalized masses, was, in fact, hostile to developing a revolutionary socialist strategy within the working class.

Popular Unity was in greater fear of the independent revolutionary activity of the workers than the threat of a military coup. It demonstrated its commitment to the Chilean capitalist state by mobilizing the military and the police to smash the "Cordones Industriales," rank-and-file action and defense committees formed to fight employers' lockouts, fascist violence and the preparation for another military coup after the failed Tanquetazo attempt of June 1973.

Right to the last, President Salvador Allende placed his faith in the capitalist state and the forces of repression, bringing Pinochet and the military brass into his government where they used their positions to launch their coup, unleashing a nightmare lasting more than a decade and a half.

The pseudo-left in power

The Broad Front alliance that elected Boric is made up of ex-student radicals, trade union bureaucrats, professionals and academics whose material interests and political outlook are diametrically opposed to revolutionary international socialism. Many of its young leaders came to prominence during massive student demonstrations against the privatized education system in 2011. While they regularly employ radical-sounding

phraseology combined with the promotion of "progressive" identity politics, their main aim was to carve out a niche for themselves within capitalist economic and political institutions. The Communist Party has a longer history, but its contemporary leaders belong to the same social layer as the pseudo-left.

The results speak volumes about the damage done to the political consciousness of the masses of Chile, but especially its youth, by the gang of political charlatans who were brought to power in 2021. They are an indictment of the pseudo-left Broad Front and the Stalinist Communist Party—parties socially rooted in the upper-middle class—which saved capitalism from a profound crisis of rule in 2019, precipitated by a mass uprising that brought millions to the streets.

The ruling class relied heavily upon these political forces, along with the corporatist trade unions, to divert anti-capitalist sentiment behind appeals to replace the authoritarian constitution and the promotion of the parliamentary process and "change through the ballot."

President Sebastian Piñera, with the help of all the parties in Congress, began a law-and-order campaign, while the corporate media saturated the airwaves with nightmarish scenarios of cities besieged by crime to justify the erection of a police state. They explicitly associated this with the struggle for democratic and social rights, vilifying the mass mobilizations as an explosion of criminality and attacking students and youth, immigrants, indigenous communities and other sectors of the working class.

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a trigger event, exposing the government's contempt for the basic needs of the masses. The world economy, stagnant since the 2008 financial meltdown, fell into deep crisis, with double-digit unemployment and inflation levels not seen since the 1990s.

Many impoverished families and tens of thousands of immigrants were forced into shantytowns, which the media alleged to be infested with narco-trafficking and criminal gangs. The deliberate aim of this media offensive was to cultivate xenophobic demands to expel immigrants and for an iron fist against crime that have dominated the political discourse ever since.

In the lead-up to the 2021 election, all the so-called "left" parties cultivated enormous expectations in the electoral Broad Front-Communist Party "Approve Dignity" pact, which was promising to "bury neoliberalism," "reform" the murderous military police and replace the junta's charter with "the most progressive constitution in the world." They also placed immense pressure on the working class and youth to vote for Boric as the only way to defeat Kast, the fascist.

In opposition to the euphoria over the pseudo-left's election victories, the *World Socialist Web Site* stressed that 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 fascist opponent." The WSWS warned that, sooner rather later, Boric would "work to immobilize the struggles of the working class ... straitjacket any movement against capitalism and at a certain point unleash state repression."

Not only state repression, but the scaffolding of a police state dictatorship began to take shape. The pseudo-left government organized a massive infusion of funds to the state apparatus and secured the passage of a whole gamut of repressive laws.

The Boric government, just as its "Pink Tide" counterparts lauded by the international pseudo-left in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, paved the way for the far right through policies that defended capitalist property relations and failed to alter conditions of poverty and extreme social inequality confronting the masses.

Now, 35 years after the end of military rule in Chile, the meeting at the La Moneda Palace to organize an "orderly" transfer of power from a pseudo-left president to a fascist defender of the Pinochet dictatorship

marks a turning point in this broader process.

Critical lessons must be drawn. Latin America's new rightist regimes are no more stable than the Pink Tide governments that they have replaced. They will find no source of stability in US imperialism's rapacious aggression in the hemisphere, only chaos and intensified class struggle.

Workers in Chile and throughout Latin America must politically assimilate the lessons of the entire experience with "left nationalist" parties promising to implement reforms under capitalism. Their betrayals, facilitated by their pseudo-left satellites, are rooted in their class basis in the affluent petty bourgeoisie and will only be repeated wherever they come to power.

The decisive question is to actively build a new revolutionary leadership in the working class, sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, in Chile and across Latin America: this is the only way to successfully wage the struggle against fascism, war and exploitation.



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