

Kast's State of the Nation speech in Chile: Blueprint for social counterrevolution wrapped in "national unity" rhetoric

Mauricio Saavedra

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Chile's President José Antonio Kast delivered his first State of the Nation address to the National Congress on Monday, an 82-day marker of a government that has already set in motion the most sweeping assault on the democratic and social rights of the working class since the Pinochet dictatorship.

The speech was a masterclass in political duplicity: every reactionary measure was swaddled in the language of "dialogue," "unity," and "the common good," while the fascistic president presented himself as the humble servant of a nation in crisis.

The address must be understood for what it is: the ideological accompaniment to a social counterrevolution already underway through executive decrees. Kast spoke not to the working class but over its head, addressing the congressional representatives of the Chilean ruling class—including the "opposition" Socialist Party and Christian Democrats, whom he repeatedly flattered as partners in national reconstruction—and the corporate and financial elites whose interests his government serves with ruthless determination.

The "emergency" as pretext

Kast's speech was built around a single organizing conceit: that Chile is in a "state of emergency" requiring extraordinary measures. "The emergency is not where Chile should remain," he intoned. "The emergency is the place from which Chile rises." The rhetorical device is transparent. The "emergency" is the pretext for bypassing democratic deliberation, for ruling through presidential decrees, for concentrating executive power and for demanding that the working class pay for a crisis it did not create.

What is the nature of this emergency? Kast identified three factors: security, economic growth and social welfare. The sequencing is deliberate. The security emergency—the specter of crime, of an immigrant "invasion," of hooded vandals, of Mapuche "terrorism"—is placed first because it is the most politically useful for justifying the expansion of the repressive state apparatus. It is the battering ram with which all the other measures will be enforced.

Kast cited 378 homicides as of May 31, claiming a slight decline from 444 at the same point last year, and presented this as evidence that his policies are working. But the homicide rate is not the product of a sudden explosion of criminality among the poor. It is the organic expression of extreme social inequality—the same inequality that Kast's free-market policies are designed to deepen. As the WSWs has documented, the price of Chile's Basic Food Basket has increased by 28 percent between

September 2025 and April 2026 and has more than doubled since October 2019, while the miserable minimum wage covers not even food, let alone transport and rent.

The police state expands

The security measures outlined in the address represent a qualitative intensification of the police-state framework erected under Gabriel Boric's pseudo-left government. Kast announced the creation of a "Registry of Vandals and Incivilities" that will track those who commit "attacks against police officers, against healthcare workers, or against anyone on public transportation." Those listed will lose social benefits. "No one who burns a bus, no one who destroys public property deserves free education," Kast declared, to applause.

This is not a measure against crime. It is a mechanism for the political policing of social protest. The registry will criminalize not only acts of violence but "acts of incivility"—a category so elastic it can encompass street drinking, unauthorized gatherings, and, ultimately, any form of working-class assembly that displeases the authorities. The stripping of social benefits—education, pensions, housing subsidies—amounts to the economic proscription of political opponents, a technique with a long and bloody pedigree in Latin American counterrevolution.

Kast also announced the extension of *in flagrante delicto* arrests from 12 to 24 hours, the strengthening of "autonomous powers" for police in initial proceedings and a bill to penalize hooded protesters. He invoked the specter of Molotov cocktails being hurled at the Alameda, the burning of a public bus, and the destruction of a church—all coded references to the 2019 social uprising, which Kast and his class are determined to ensure never recurs.

The address made clear that the Carabineros will operate with political impunity. "When a police officer, a detective, or a border guard, in the line of duty, uses legitimate force, rest assured, be certain that they will have the backing of this President and this Government," Kast vowed. This is the green light for the kind of state violence that left 36 dead and hundreds mutilated during the 2019 protests—violence for which, as the WSWs has repeatedly noted, virtually no one has been held accountable.

The economic counterrevolution

Kast's economic program, presented under the anodyne label of "National Reconstruction," is the centerpiece of his social counterrevolution. The speech was remarkably candid about the fiscal situation—a structural deficit of 3.7 percent of GDP—and used this as justification for a program of austerity that will fall entirely on the working class.

"Every peso the government allocates to pay interest on a mismanaged debt is one less peso we have for security, for health, for education, for pensions, for housing," Kast said, before pivoting to the real agenda: corporate tax cuts, deregulation and the unlocking of stalled investment projects. He boasted that \$13.9 billion in investment was approved in May alone—the highest amount in 11 years—and that 389 projects representing nearly \$89 billion are undergoing environmental assessment.

This is the language of the oligarchy. The "investment" Kast celebrates is the mechanism by which finance capital and the transnational corporations will extract wealth from Chilean labor and Chilean natural resources. The streamlining of environmental permits, the reduction of corporate tax rates from 27 to 23 percent, the tax stability guarantees for large investors—these are not technocratic adjustments. They are the policy instruments of class expropriation, directly modeled on Pinochet's Decree Law 600.

Kast was explicit about the class logic: "The dilemma between popularity and responsibility—we've already resolved it. We resolved that dilemma in favor of responsibility." To put it more bluntly, the needs of the working class will be sacrificed to the demands of capital, and this will be done with no apologies.

The Indigenous question: privatization by another name

The section of the address dealing with the Mapuche people was particularly revealing. Kast announced a reform of the Indigenous Act that would "eliminate land-use restrictions and allow any member of these communities to lease the land or mortgage it under the same conditions as any Chilean." He asked, with feigned innocence: "Why should there be a difference between Chileans? Why can't someone who owns land use it? Why can't they farm it?"

The answer, which Kast knows perfectly well, is that the collective land tenure system was established precisely to prevent what his reform is designed to accomplish: the piecemeal transfer of Mapuche ancestral lands into the hands of forestry companies, agribusiness and real estate speculators. The "freedom" Kast offers is the freedom of the dispossessed to sell the only asset they possess. It is the logic of the enclosure movements that drove peasants off the land in early modern Europe, dressed in the language of liberal individualism.

This reform is the economic complement to the military occupation of the Araucanía that Kast celebrated earlier in the speech. The Army and Marines have been deployed to "all the areas that were once considered off-limits." The terrorist label has been affixed to Mapuche land defenders. Now, with the political resistance crushed or driven underground, the economic dispossession can proceed through legal channels. "Araucanía will no longer be a refuge for terrorists," Kast declared. It will instead become a refuge for timber conglomerates.

The pseudo-left prepares to collaborate

Perhaps the most significant political message of the address was

directed not at Kast's right-wing base but at the "opposition" benches. Kast repeatedly invoked the need for cross-party collaboration, flattering Congress as a potential "bridge" for national reconstruction. He singled out the Socialist Party for praise, and his ministers have been actively courting "Democratic Socialists" to provide the government's flagship legislation with the veneer of bipartisan legitimacy.

This is not idle hope. The pseudo-left and Stalinist parties that constituted the Boric government have spent four years implementing the same law-and-order agenda, the same anti-immigrant policies, and the same fiscal discipline that Kast is now radicalizing. Senator Gastón Saavedra of the Socialist Party has already signaled his willingness to "dialogue" on tax cuts, boasting that Boric handed over a reduced structural deficit. The Communist Party, which ran Jeannette Jara as its presidential candidate, congratulated Kast on his victory and promised "firm, democratic, and responsible opposition"—meaning opposition within the institutional channels that Kast is systematically dismantling.

As the WSWS warned in December 2021, the political descendants of the forces that straitjacketed the working class ahead of the 1973 coup are today playing the same role. The Broad Front, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party are not a bulwark against fascism; they are its enablers.

What Kast did not say

What was absent from the address is as significant as what was included. Kast made no mention of the student demonstrations that have rocked his government in recent weeks, nor of the health workers warning that major hospitals will run out of funding by August. He did not address the 9.1 percent unemployment rate, the highest in nearly five years, except to promise that growth would eventually create jobs. He did not explain how cutting 435 billion pesos from the National Health Fund would improve healthcare, nor how a 15 percent cut to the Universal Guaranteed Pension would protect the elderly.

Most fundamentally, Kast did not address the question that underlies all others: the extreme social inequality that has defined Chile for 120 years, with the top 10 percent capturing 55-60 percent of national income while the bottom 50 percent scrape by on 9-10 percent. His policies will widen this chasm. His "emergency" is the emergency of a ruling class that fears the population it exploits.

Kast's approval ratings have already plummeted to between 36 and 39 percent. The millions who voted for him did so not out of enthusiasm for fascism but out of desperation after the betrayals of the pseudo-left. Their political consciousness will develop through struggle. The task facing the working class in Chile and internationally is to build a new revolutionary leadership, sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, capable of uniting workers across national, ethnic and racial lines in the struggle against capitalism, imperialism and war. Kast's address was a declaration of class war. The working class must prepare its response.



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