

The ignominious role of the Chilean “left” in Kast’s sweeping assault on immigrants

Part 2: Pseudo-left Approve Dignity government paves the way for Kast

Mauricio Saavedra
22 June 2026

This is the second of a two-part series. Part one was published here.

Chile’s entire political and media establishment saturated public consciousness with nightmarish scenarios of cities besieged by immigrant-driven crime for one calculated purpose: to cultivate among the population a xenophobic demand for mass expulsions and an iron fist against those the state had rendered most vulnerable.

This strategy at first backfired. Throughout the 2010s, social anger had been accumulating against four decades of privatizations, labor repression and constitutional protections for capital that had produced staggering inequality. Strikes and protests over the two-tier health system, the miserable returns of the private pension funds and a multitude of other grievances punctuated the decade, all unfolding against the backdrop of economic stagnation following the 2008 global financial crash and the end of the commodities super-cycle.

These struggles were not isolated. They formed part of an international resurgence of working-class and student opposition to capitalism, from the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement, from the indignados in Spain to the mass strikes in France. In Chile, this accumulated anger detonated in October 2019 with the largest anti-capitalist uprising in the country’s history.

The uprising confronted the Chilean bourgeoisie with a profound crisis of rule. The center-left coalition that had presided over the civilian restoration—the Socialist Party-Christian Democrat Concertación—was a despised and spent force. It had preserved and strengthened every pillar of Pinochet’s neoliberal agenda, exposing the civilian political caste as an instrument of capitalist rule indistinguishable in substance from the right. By 2018 the Concertación had lost the presidency twice to Pinochet’s acolyte, the billionaire Sebastián Piñera, and its parliamentary representation had collapsed.

The 2019 revolt revealed that the traditional parties could no longer contain the class antagonisms their own policies had generated. The Broad Front and the Stalinist Communist Party, both consummately committed to the defense of private property and the capitalist state, were brought forward. While the Communist Party publicly claimed to oppose National Unity talks with the right-wing government in November 2019, it used its trade union apparatus to shut down all industrial action, placing a wedge between the working class and the youth and students who were the predominant demographic in the street mobilizations. The parliamentary “left” worked overtime to dissipate anti-capitalist sentiment into safe constitutional channels, promoting the illusion that the capitalist state could be democratized by rewriting Pinochet’s charter.

The demobilization of the 2019 revolt created the political conditions for an unprecedented campaign of criminalization. The predominantly rightist

corporate media monopolies saturated the airwaves with scenarios of cities besieged by crime, explicitly associating the supposed security crisis with the struggle for democratic and social rights. Student strikes and school occupations were relabeled as delinquency. Shantytowns built by desperate immigrants and the homeless were alleged to be infested with narco-trafficking and criminal gangs. Indigenous Mapuche communities reclaiming ancestral lands were smeared as terrorists.

The Piñera government seized on the COVID-19 pandemic to declare a state of catastrophe, deploying the military on the streets and placing the country under curfew. Bills were put before congress to have the armed forces perform policing functions and to place Mapuche regions under military jurisdiction. The entire political establishment, right and “left” alike, collaborated in erecting the scaffolding of a police state. This was the framework that Boric would inherit, expand and weaponize.

Gabriel Boric’s political trajectory encapsulates the function of the pseudo-left. He emerged as a leader of the 2011 student rebellion, a movement that shook the foundations of Chile’s privatized education system and launched a generation of young radicals into public prominence. By 2014 he had entered parliament as a deputy, seamlessly transitioning from the street to the state.

In 2017 he helped found the Broad Front, a 14-party electoral alliance that presented itself as a progressive alternative to the discredited establishment. By November 2019, with the country in the throes of a revolutionary uprising, Boric signed Piñera’s “Agreement for Social Peace,” committing the pseudo-left to channeling mass anger into constitutional reform.

In October 2020 Boric voted against Law 21.325, the migration bill, and joined 41 opposition deputies in filing a challenge before the Constitutional Court contesting provisions that were unconstitutional, posturing as a defender of immigrant rights. Yet by the 2021 presidential campaign, his position had already shifted decisively. Confronted on air about his vote against the migration bill, he denied having signed the Constitutional Court challenge and stressed “the importance of strengthening border control,” stating that for those caught entering clandestinely, “the principle has to be return.”

The pseudo-left is not a collection of misguided individuals who have betrayed their principles. It is a specific political tendency rooted in the affluent upper-middle class, concerned above all with securing a more equal distribution of political power and a greater share of the wealth derived from the exploitation of the working class. It is explicitly anti-Marxist, substituting the fight to establish the political independence of the working class with the selfish concerns of the upper-middle layers for equality in corporate boardrooms and the capitalist state. Its feigned

concern for the environment, the oppression of minorities and other causes does not extend beyond securing a seat at the decision-making table.

Like its international counterparts—the Democratic Socialists of America in the United States, Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece—the Broad Front sets itself the task of dissipating anti-capitalist sentiment into safe parliamentary channels, talking up the possibility of reforming the system from within and injecting life back into discredited political institutions.

At critical inflection points during the reemergence of the class struggle, these organizations mouth left-sounding phraseology only to better ensnare radicalized youth, students and workers, to dissipate their struggles and divert them back into the grip of the despised establishment parties. With each betrayal, they cultivate not only demoralization and disorientation, but also the most reactionary and backward sentiments among the broader population, strengthening ultra-nationalist, militarist, xenophobic and fascist tendencies.

Boric's presidency

Boric's presidency from 2022 to 2026 fulfilled this script with precision. He appointed as finance minister the austerity-committed Mario Marcel, who slashed spending and raised interest rates to their highest level in four decades amid double-digit inflation. The social reforms promised during the election campaign evaporated. In their place, Boric showered the Carabineros with funds and equipment, pushed through a battery of repressive laws unprecedented since the return to civilian rule—the Naín-Retamal “trigger happy” law, the intelligence law broadening spying powers, a revamped anti-terrorist law, measures retroactively protecting state agents for the use of lethal force—and imposed a permanent state of exception against the indigenous Mapuche.

On immigration, Boric's government used Law 21.325 to its full repressive extent, carrying out more than 4,350 expulsions, deploying the military to the northern border, and in 2024 introducing its own executive-initiated bill targeting due process protections and unaccompanied-minor provisions, the very protections Boric as a deputy had claimed to defend. The corporate media's anti-immigrant campaign, initiated under Piñera, went into overdrive under Boric, with the pseudo-left government providing the “progressive” cover for a xenophobic assault that the right could never have legitimized on its own.

The Chilean Communist Party played an indispensable role in this betrayal. Promoted for decades as a Marxist organization and the historic party of the Chilean working class, the Communist Party long ago severed any connection to revolutionary socialism. By the 1930s it had adopted Stalin's “two-stage” theory of revolution, which subordinates the working class to the so-called progressive national bourgeoisie and confines socialist aspirations to the indefinite future. It embraced the Popular Front strategy, forming alliances with so-called “progressive” capitalist forces and promoting a national exceptionalist myth that Chile's bourgeoisie had democratic traditions and adhered to constitutional norms.

This was the outlook that, during the 1970-1973 Popular Unity government, led the Communist Party to fear the independent mobilization of the working class more than the threat of a military coup, a fear vindicated in blood when Pinochet's forces, whom Allende had brought into his cabinet, unleashed 17 years of dictatorship.

During the civilian restoration, the party completed its transformation into an outright bourgeois organization, serving as junior coalition partner to Michelle Bachelet's government from 2014 to 2018 and providing critical support to Boric's Apruebo Dignidad coalition. Key Communist cadres—Jeannette Jara as Minister of Labor, Camila Vallejo as government spokesperson, Nicolás Cataldo as Minister of Education—administered the

austerity and police-state policies of the Boric government.

In the 2025 presidential election, Jara ran as the Communist Party's own candidate, the first time a Communist militant led a presidential ticket since before the dictatorship. Her platform was straight out of the right's playbook: strict border control with military deployment, temporary biometric registration of immigrants, immediate expulsion of undocumented foreigners who commit crimes, and the construction of expulsion centers with biometric technology. She explicitly endorsed Boric's border-control measures and her sole distinction from Kast was rhetorical—she presented a “humanist” vision while arguing that Kast's mass deportation plan was unfeasible only because Venezuela would not receive deportation flights, not because of principled opposition to mass expulsion.

The actual conditions facing immigrants expose the fraudulence of the security narrative that both the right and the entire Chilean “left” have used to justify their assault. Nearly 4 of every 10 families living in *campamentos* (shantytowns) are immigrants, with the number of immigrant families in these settlements growing 267 percent between 2018 and 2025. The share of immigrants who are multidimensionally poor is nearly double that of non-immigrants, with over half a million immigrants living in this condition, a gap that persists even among those who have lived in Chile more than five years.

In the agricultural sector, where immigrant labor is heavily concentrated, conditions have deteriorated sharply: daily pay for a double shift has fallen from an historical 100,000-120,000 Chilean pesos (CLP) (approx. US\$120) to roughly CLP 55,000 (US\$60), while benefits like decent housing, food and safe transport have largely disappeared. Workdays of more than 12 hours have become normalized, alongside informal encampments, lack of bathrooms, unprotected exposure to pesticides, and the systematic use of informal intermediaries who simultaneously control transport, housing and access to jobs, creating situations of effectively captive workers. The seasonal-worker visa, the legal pathway meant for agricultural workers, was granted to only 22 people between 2015 and 2024—demonstrating that the formal legal channel is essentially irrelevant to how the sector actually staffs itself.

These conditions are not an accident or an aberration. They are the deliberate product of immigration controls designed to create a vulnerable, super-exploitable layer of the working class whose depressed wages and conditions are then used as a lever to drive down the conditions of all workers, native-born and migrant alike.

Kast's legislative assault, extending administrative detention from five to 180 days, requiring health centers, schools and social security agencies to report personal data on undocumented immigrants to immigration authorities, stripping undocumented immigrants and their children of access to health care, education and housing assistance, will eliminate even the minimal protections that currently exist. The bill requiring institutions to report personal data will, as research has demonstrated, produce a powerful chilling effect that drives immigrants away from seeking medical care, enrolling children in school and reporting labor violations and greater invisibility and vulnerability.

The attacks on immigrants are the precursor to a wholesale assault on the democratic, social and economic rights of the entire working class. The same government that is building trenches and walls, extending detention periods and stripping migrants of access to health care and education is simultaneously slashing corporate taxes, cutting public spending, deregulating environmental protections and militarizing the police. The division of the working class into “native” and “foreign,” “documented” and “undocumented,” is the essential political mechanism by which the bourgeoisie prepares its offensive against all workers.

The Marxist position on immigration flows from the revolutionary internationalist perspective that the working class has no fatherland. As Marx and Engels declared in the *Communist Manifesto*, modern industrial

labor has stripped the proletariat “of every trace of national character,” and the watchword of the socialist movement is “Workers of all Lands, Unite!”

The productive forces have long since burst through national boundaries. The attempt to resolve the crisis of capitalism by fortifying national borders and expelling migrant workers is not merely reactionary in practice—it is a utopian reaction against the entire trajectory of world economic development, which has irreversibly integrated the globe and created an international working class.

The nationalist orientation espoused by every party in the Chilean political establishment, from Kast’s fascistic Republican Party to Jara’s Stalinist Communist Party, is aimed at driving a deadly wedge into the working class along lines of nationality, ethnicity and legal status, precisely to paralyze its capacity to resist the broader social counterrevolution being prepared against all workers. The pseudo-left parties that today endorse immigration controls do so because of their nationalist perspective, which subordinates the working class to the supposed interests of the nation. Their betrayals are rooted in their class basis in the affluent petty bourgeoisie and will only be repeated wherever they come to power.

The struggle for socialism and the international unity of the working class is inseparable from the unconditional defense of immigrant workers and their freedom to live and work in the country of their choosing with full and equal rights. Socialism champions the unconditional defense of the right to free movement of labor; opposition to all deportations, border militarization and detention centers; full legalization and equal rights for all migrants regardless of status; equal access to health care, education, housing and social benefits; the abolition of all immigration controls that serve to create a vulnerable, super-exploitable layer of the working class; and the building of unified struggles of native-born and migrant workers against their common exploiters.

Only the independent mobilization of the working class, on the basis of a revolutionary internationalist program and the building of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Chile and across Latin America, can defeat the fascistic assault on immigrants and prepare the way for the socialist transformation of society.



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