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Chile's election: Boric and pseudo-left offer no defense against threat of fascism

Immense pressure is being exerted on Chilean workers and youth to vote for Gabriel Boric of the Apruebo Dignidad electoral front in a second-round presidential ballot. Boric, who won 25.8 percent of the vote in the first round will face off with the fascistic candidate of the Christian Social Front, José Antonio Kast, who won 27.9 percent, on December 19.

The working class has every reason to be alarmed by the electoral growth of the fascistic right in Chile. Kast's program of slashing public spending and gutting the public sector, lowering taxes for the super-rich and erecting a police state is aimed at making the working class pay for the crisis of Chilean capitalism, which has been deepened by the government's criminally negligent response to the COVID-19 pandemic over the last 18 months.

There has been a pervasive propaganda campaign to sell the Frente Amplio and the Communist Party coalition as some "radical left" alternative to the right. It is nothing of the sort. Boric, a radical university student leader in the 2011 education protests, has since 2014 sat in the lower house of congress. There he infamously entered into national unity talks with the current right-wing government of President Sebastian Piñera in 2019 to head off massive anti-capitalist demonstrations. While the history of the Communist Party is far longer and more complex, today it is a thoroughly bourgeois party.



Gabriel Boric (Credit: Mediabanco)

The Frente Amplio models itself on the Spanish pseudo-left group Podemos and the government it formed with the Spanish Socialist Workers Party in 2020. While in Chile it was the right-wing billionaire President Piñera who allowed COVID-19 to rip through the working class neighborhoods, in Spain it was the Podemos-PSOE coalition government. Under their watch 88,000 COVID-19 deaths and over 5.1 million infections were recorded as the fake left regime kept non-essential industries open. It has also deliberately downplayed the growing danger of fascistic military conspiracies to overthrow the government as it cracks down on the strike wave sweeping the country.

Chile's parliamentary opposition, which is desperate to cling to some political power, has come out for Boric. From the Christian Democrats to the Socialist Party, they are cynically sounding the alarm bells over Kast's rise.

"I will vote for Gabriel Boric," said Christian Democrat presidential candidate Yasna Provoste the day after losing in the first round elections. "José Antonio Kast represents the reversal of all advances and the serious risk of plunging the country into a new wave of violence..."

Supporting Boric "is what any democrat would do today, be it a liberal democrat, a right-wing democrat, a center-left democrat, or a left-wing democrat. What is at stake today is democracy, what is at stake today is respect for human rights," argued Party for Democracy (PPD) senator Guido Girardi. His remarks were echoed by Ricardo Lagos (PPD), Álvaro Elizalde (PS), Jaime Naranjo (PPD) and other dinosaurs of the former ruling center-left coalition.

Yet over the last three years they all tacitly supported Kast's law-and-order crusade when Piñera gained parliamentary approval for key aspects of his platform to unleash repression against ongoing social protests, immigrants and the indigenous communities.

Nor has Kast fallen from the sky. He was a longtime congressman of the extreme right Independent Democratic Union (UDI), a party closely associated with the fascist-military dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet. Like Pinochet's University of Chicago and Harvard-trained civilian aides of an earlier period, the post-dictatorship parliamentary center-left was also inserted by imperialism into a convulsive political situation in the 1980s. When working class struggles erupted in that decade in response to a deep recession and bloody military repression, this center-left political opposition channeled the incipient rebellion into calls for a return to parliamentary democracy in which the fascistic military-civilian alliance was left intact.

The greatest fear of the "renewed" left and the Stalinist Communist Party was a return to the revolutionary struggles of 1970-1973 when the question of dual power was sharply posed in Chile. More than a decade had passed since Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government successfully reined in the rank-and-file committees, the Industrial Belts and other organizing bodies of the proletariat in advance of the US imperialist financed and backed coup d'état of September 11, 1973.

Their chief ideological weapon was the Stalinist theory of a two-stage revolution and the bankrupt concept of a "peaceful parliamentary road to socialism" through Popular Fronts—both of which disarmed the working class and prevented its mobilization at the crucial moment. Part and parcel of this ideology was their promotion of national exceptionalism, with the claim that Chile's state institutions, its police and armed forces, had a legacy of adherence to democratic and constitutional norms.

These misleaders were able to effectively paralyze working class political action because of their domination of the labor movement in the 1970s and because there existed no Bolshevik-type party to provide political leadership.

Under the influence of Pabloite revisionism and its contention that the Cuban Revolution of 1959 proved that the socialist revolution could be carried out through "blunted instruments," i.e., petty-bourgeois nationalist guerrilla movements, without the

participation of the working class or the leadership of a conscious Marxist vanguard party, the Chilean section of the Fourth International had abandoned Marxism and liquidated itself into the guerrillaist Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) in the 1960s.

The transition from dictatorship to civilian rule in the late 1980s was deliberately realized without even touching the pillars of *Pinochetismo*—the amnesty law protecting the military from prosecution, the authoritarian constitution, the autonomy of Carabineros and the Armed Forces, the subsidiary state and extreme social inequality. The Stalinists, who remained on the parliamentary periphery but held trade union posts, limited themselves to bourgeois demands to redraft the Pinochet constitution and to “democratize” the state apparatus.

It is under the present conditions of a renewed revolutionary period that the bourgeoisie is relying on the pseudo-left to play the role of the old and deeply hated political caste that emerged in the transition from military to civilian rule three decades ago and the Popular Unity of an earlier period.

Like all these previous permutations, Apruebo Dignidad is beholden to capitalism and is dedicated to upholding the capitalist nation-state.

“We are preparing to be a government that provides certainty of change and brings stability to our country. Aware of the moment we are going through, we present this government plan made with the utmost responsibility,” the alliance’s program states. The paeans to stability and responsibility are directed at Chilean and international investors, guaranteeing that in power they will be “fiscally responsible.”

Whether the historically weak, subservient and virulently anti-Communist Chilean capitalist class buys their program is another question. The president of the Confederation of Production and Commerce again raised concerns about the inclusion of the Communist Party. Seeking to allay any fears, Boric replied by saying: “we have the duty to talk to everyone, and to bring everyone together, and in this sense, large companies ... have to be part of this transformation process.”

The specific function of this electoral front is to obstruct an increasingly rebellious and militant working class that will inevitably come into conflict with the ruling class and their servants amid the worst global capitalist crisis since the interwar period.

Notwithstanding the media's promotion of Boric as a "radical left," the Frente Amplio-Communist Party coalition is part of the pseudo-left, whose social constituency is the upper-middle class—lawyers, professionals, academics, the political and trade union bureaucracies, the upper civil service, state functionaries, and artists and media celebrities. It is deeply hostile to the independent mobilization of the working class and is opposed to the fight for social equality.

It has taken less than two weeks since the first round for the Apruebo Dignidad coalition to begin shifting from pledges to initiate "transformative" changes to a law-and-order discourse. In an attempt to woo the center-right, Boric has taken up all of Kast's talking points of being tough on delinquency, assuring "unwavering commitment to confront drug trafficking, crime and recover public spaces with security..."

The *World Socialist Web Site* warns that a pseudo-left/Stalinist-led government will work to immobilize the struggles of the working class. Based on the history of these tendencies in Chile and internationally, they will straitjacket any movement against capitalism and at a certain point unleash state repression. This betrayal of expectations and aspirations will serve only to demoralize the masses and further embolden the fascistic and reactionary forces.

The working class can defend itself only through the building of a party that is entirely independent of the capitalist class, based on an internationalist revolutionary program, directed toward the establishment of workers' power, the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a world socialist society.

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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