

Remembering September 11, 1973: The US-backed Pinochet Coup in Chile

This September marks the 50th anniversary of the US backed coup by Pinochet in Chile. It was one of the heaviest and bloodiest defeats ever suffered by the left and progressive movement in Latin America. There are a number of events being organised in Britain, [including in Scotland](#) (full details also below), this year to remember and discuss the Chilean process and coup and links are provided below. (The introductory note is compiled by Dave Kellaway of [Anti*Capitalist Resistance in England & Wales](#).)

*The following article is an edited extract of a chapter in a book, Recorded Fragments, by Daniel Bensaïd that [Resistance Books](#) has translated into English (published in 2020). The book is a transcript of a series of radio interviews Daniel did with the radio station Paris Plurielle in 2008. He discusses the politics behind a series of key dates in 20th Century history. Daniel Bensaïd was born in Toulouse in 1946. He became a leader of the 1968 student movement and subsequently of one of France's main far left organizations (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire) and of the [Fourth International](#). He is the author of **Marx for our Times**, Verso: 2010, **Strategies of Resistance**, Resistance Books: 2014 and **An Impatient Life**, Verso: 2015. He died in Paris in 2010.*

On 11 September 1973, the Chilean military put a bloody end to the three year reformist experience of the Salvador Allende governments. Augusto Pinochet leader of the armed forces initiated a new cycle of bloody repression and brutal economic liberalism that had started in Bolivia with the 1971 Banzer

coup. He was soon followed by other dictatorships in South America such as the one led by General Videla in Argentina in 1976.

The United States, which intervenes throughout South America, has no intention of allowing the people in its backyard to raise their heads against its interests.

Perhaps we should begin by recalling that the 11 September coup, in 1973, and not that of 2001 Twin Towers terrorist attack, was first and foremost an emotional shock. We were transfixed by the news that arrived on the radio from the headquarters of the Presidential Palace, La Moneda, and then by the announcements that gradually came in about the success of the coup d'état. At first we hoped it would not succeed, since another coup d'état had failed in June three months before, but then we got the news of Allende's death.

How can such an emotional shock be explained, this had not been our reaction during the bigger bloodbath in 1965 when the Indonesian Communist Party was crushed or more recently with the repression of the Sudanese Communist Party? I believe it is because there was a very strong identification in Europe and Latin America with what was happening in Chile. There was a feeling that this was indeed a new scenario and a possibility, practically a laboratory experiment, which was valid for both Europe and Latin America, in different ways.

So, why was it so important for Europe?

Because we had the impression, partly false I would say today, that we finally had a country that was a reflection of our own reality. Unlike other Latin American countries, there was a strong communist party, there was a socialist party represented or led by Salvador Allende, there was an extreme left of the same generation as ours. Small groups existed like the MAPU (Unitary Popular Action Movement, a Christian current) and MIR, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left, born

in 1964-65 under the impulse of the Cuban Revolution. There was an identification with the latter organization, with its militants, with its leaders who were practically of our generation, who had a fairly comparable background. The MIR was formed from two sources: on the one hand inspired by Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution; on the other hand there was a Trotskyist influence, it must be said, through a great historian of Latin America, Luis Vitale. He was one of the founding fathers of the MIR, even if he was removed from it, or left shortly afterwards. All this in a country where, in the end, Stalinism had never been dominant, including on the left, nor did it have the role that the communist party had in Argentina, for example.

There was a specific factor in Chile, which is one of the difficulties in understanding the situation. The Chilean Socialist Party, even though it called itself socialist, had little to do with European social democracy. It was a party that had been built in the 1930s as a reaction, in opposition to the Stalinisation of the Communist International. So it was a party more to the left of the CP than to the right, so there was a strong sense given to the idea that Chile could give the example of a scenario where the left came to power through elections. This would then be the beginning of a social process of radicalization leading to, or, let's say, transitioning towards a radical social revolution at a time when, it should also be remembered, the prestige of the Cuban Revolution in Latin America was, if not intact, then at least still very important.

I believe there are still lessons for us about what happened in Chile.

Today, I would be more cautious about this reflection of European realities. I think that, seen from a distance, there was a tendency to underestimate the social relations and the reserves of reaction and conservatism that existed in Chilean society. We saw this a lot in the army because, as was said

and repeated at the time, the army had been trained by German instructors on the Prussian army model, which was already not very encouraging. But what's more, as I've seen since then, it's a country where the Catholic tradition, the conservative Catholic current, is important.

And besides, this was just a starting point. Allende was elected in September-October 1970, in a presidential election, but only with a relative majority of about 37%. For his nomination to be ratified by the Assembly conditions were set. These conditions included two key aspects: no interference with the army and respect for private property. These were the two limits set from the outset by the dominant classes, by the institutions, for accepting Allende's investiture.

Nevertheless, it is true that the electoral victory raised people's hopes and sparked a strengthening of the social movements, which culminated in a major electoral victory in the municipal elections of January 1971. I believe that Popular Unity, the left-wing coalition on which Allende was relying at that time, had on this occasion (and only then) an absolute majority in an election.

This obviously gave greater legitimacy to developing the process. So we had an electoral victory, a radicalization, but also a polarization that was initially internal to Chile, which gradually translated into a mobilization of the right, including action on the streets. The landmark date was the lorry drivers' strike in October 1972. But it should not be thought that it was employee led: it was the employers who organised it. Chile's long geographical configuration meant that road transport was strategic. So there was this truckers' strike, therefore, supported by what were called **cacerolazos (people banging empty pans)**, i.e. protest movements, particularly by middle-class consumers in Santiago. Santiago makes up more than half of the country in terms of population. It constituted a first attempt at destabilization in the autumn of 1972.

At that point, there was finally a debate on the way forward for the Chilean process, which opened up two possibilities in response to the destabilization of the right. The latter was also strongly supported by the United States. We know today with the disclosures of the Condor plan how much and for how long the United States had been involved in the preparation of the coup d'état, through the multinationals but also through American military advisers. So in early 1973, after the warning of the lorry drivers' strike, there were several options. Either a radicalization of the process, with increased incursions into the private property sector, with radical redistribution measures, wage increases, and so on. All of which were debated. Or on the contrary, and this was the thesis that prevailed, put forward by Vukovik, Minister of Economy and Finance, a member of the Communist Party. The government had to reassure the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes by definitively delimiting the area of public property or social property, and by giving additional guarantees to the military.

The second episode of destabilization was much more dramatic, no longer a corporate strike like that of the lorry drivers, but in June 1973 we saw a first attempt, a dry run for a coup d'état, the so-called **tancazo**, in which the army, in fact a tank regiment, took to the streets but was neutralized.

I believe that this was the crucial moment. For example, it was the moment when the MIR, which was a small organisation of a few thousand very dynamic militants – we must not overestimate its size, but for Chile it was significant – proposed joining the government, but under certain conditions. After the failure of the first coup d'état, the question arose of forming a government whose centre of gravity would shift to the left, which would take measures to punish or disarm the conspiring military. But what was done was exactly the opposite.

That is to say, between the period of June 1973 and the actual

coup d'état of September 11, 1973, there was repression against the movement of soldiers in the barracks, searches to disarm the militants who had accumulated arms in anticipation of resistance to a coup d'état, and then, above all, additional pledges given to the army with the appointment of generals to ministerial posts, including Augusto Pinochet, the future dictator.

So there was a momentum shift, and Miguel Enriquez, the secretary general of the MIR who was assassinated in October 1974, a year later, wrote a text, in this intermediate period between the dry run and the coup d'état, which was called **"When were we the strongest? »**. I think he was extremely lucid: until August 1973 there were demonstrations by 700,000 demonstrators in Santiago, supporting Allende and responding to the coup d'état. That was indeed the moment when a counteroffensive by the popular movement was possible . On the contrary, the response was a shift to the right of the government alliances and additional pledges given to the military and ruling classes, which in reality meant in the end encouraging the coup d'état.

That is how we were surprised. You referred to the reformism of Salvador Allende but, in the end, compared to our reformists, he was still a giant of the class struggle. If we look at the archive documents today, he still has to be respected.

In the movement of solidarity with Chile, which was very important in the years that followed, 1973, 1974 and 1975, I would say that we were, somewhat sectarian about Allende, who was made into someone responsible for the disaster. That does not change the political problem. It implies respect for the individual, but there is still a conundrum: during the first hours of the coup d'état, he still had national radio, it was still possible to call for a general strike, whereas a call was made in the end for static resistance in the workplaces, and so on. Perhaps it was not possible. Even an organisation

like the MIR, which was supposed to be prepared militarily, was caught off guard by the coup. We see this today in Carmen Castillo's book, *An October Day in Santiago* or in his film, *Santa Fe Street*, 2007. They were caught off guard, perhaps in my opinion because they did not imagine such a brutal and massive coup d'état. They imagined the possibility of a coup d'état, but one that would be, in a way, half-baked that would usher in a new period of virtual civil war, with hotbeds of armed resistance in the countryside. Hence the importance they had given – and this is related to the other aspect of the question – to working among the peasants of the Mapuche minority, particularly in the south of the country.

But the coup d'état was a real sledgehammer blow. They hadn't really prepared, or even probably envisaged, a scenario of bringing together:

- a) the organs of popular power that did exist,
- b) the so-called "industrial belt committees (cordones)" that were more or less developed forms of self-organization, mainly in the suburbs of Santiago ;
- c) the "communal commandos" in the countryside ;
- d) work in the army, and finally
- e) in Valparaíso even an embryo of a popular assembly, a kind of local soviet.

Whatever else can be said, all that existed and suggests what could have been possible – but that would have required the will and the strategy. It was another way to respond to the coup d'état, whether in June or September, with a general strike, the disarmament of the army, something akin to an insurrection. It was always risky, but you have to weigh it up against the price of the coup d'état in terms first of all of human lives, of the disappeared, of the tortured. Above all, you have to consider the price in terms of peoples' living

conditions, when we see what Chile is today, after more than thirty years of Pinochet's dictatorship. It has been a laboratory for liberal policies. It was an historic defeat. If you look at two neighbouring countries, Chile and Argentina, the social movement in Argentina has quickly recovered its fighting spirit after the years of dictatorship, despite the 30,000 people who disappeared. In Chile, the defeat is clearly of a different scope and duration.

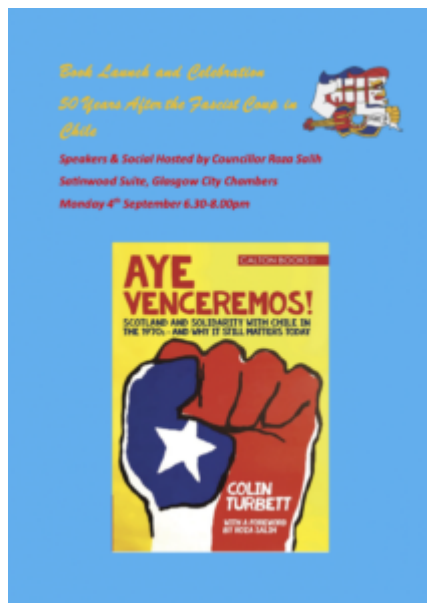
I believe that the coup d'état in Chile was the epilogue of the revolutionary ferment that followed the Cuban Revolution for 10-15 years in Latin America. And as you pointed out in the introduction, the dates clearly tell the story: three months before the coup d'état in Chile, I think it was June 1973, there was the coup d'état in Uruguay. In 1971 there was the coup d'état in Bolivia. While the dictatorship had fallen in Argentina, it returned in 1976. But let's say that symbolically, the killing of Allende, the disappearance of Enriquez and practically the entire leadership of the MIR, closed the cycle initiated by the Cuban Revolution, the OLAS (Latin American Solidarity Organization, meeting in Havana in 1967) conferences, and Che's expedition to Bolivia in 1966.

Republished from Anti*Capitalist Resistance, 29 August 2023:
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/remembering-september-11-1973-the-us-backed-pinochet-coup-in-chile/>

Forthcoming events in Scotland

Book Launch – “Aye Venceremos – Scotland and Solidarity with Chile in the 1970s – and why it still matters today.

Monday 4 September @ 18:30 Satinwood Suite, Glasgow City Council, Central Chambers, George Square, Glasgow, G2 1DU



The new book celebrates acts of Chile solidarity in Scotland in the 1970s, including the action by Rolls Royce workers in East Kilbride. It also describes the welcome given to refugees at the time. All this is set against events in Chile before and after the Coup, with eye-witness accounts from some who ended up as political exiles in Scotland. The event is being hosted by City of Glasgow Councillor Roza Salih – herself a Kurdish refugee from Iraq, and a well known campaigner since her school days, for refugee and human rights.

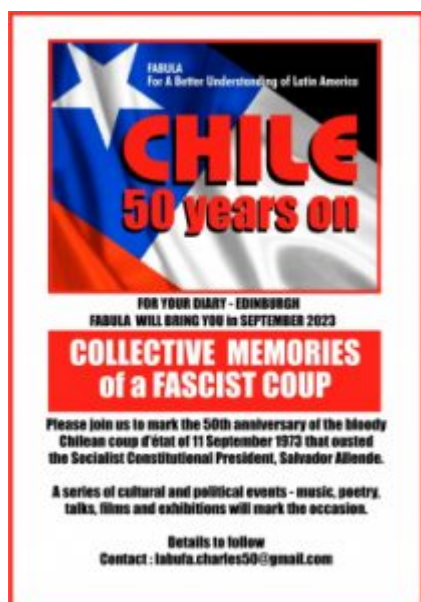
The event will include contributions from Chileans in Scotland, trade unionists and campaigners, as well as the book's author, Colin Turbett.

For a free ticket via Eventbrite see here >
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ayе-venceremos-book-launch-anniversary-celebration-glasgow-4th-sept-tickets-674133751197>

SCOTLAND – COLLECTIVE MEMORIES OF A FASCIST COUP

Monday 4 September – Thursday 21 September

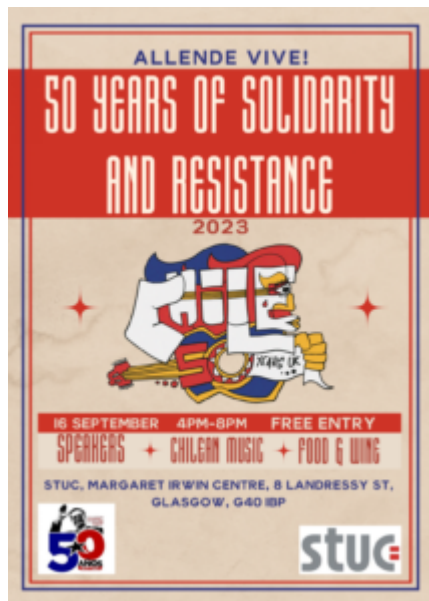
A series of cultural and political events -music, poetry, talks, films and exhibitions to mark the 50th anniversary of the bloody coup d'état of 11 September 1973.



Programme still in development for September 2023 with participation of FABULA (For A Better Understanding of Latin America) Full details here: <https://chile50years.uk/event/scotland-collective-memories-of-a-fascist-coup/>

For further information email labufa.charles50@gmail.com

**Public event hosted by the Scottish
Trades Union Congress (STUC)
Saturday 16 September @ 16:00**



[STUC, 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton,
GLASGOW, G40 1BP](#)

All welcome! Speakers, music, food and wine available

Please [register for the event here >>](#) so that the organisers can best cater for the food and wine!

**Aye Venceremos – Book Launch
& Anniversary Celebration,**

Glasgow Monday 4 September

“Aye Venceremos” describes the history of Scots 1970s solidarity with Chile. The 50th anniversary event involves speakers and celebration.

Hosted by Glasgow City Councillor Roza Salih – herself a refugee from Kurdistan – the launch of *Aye Venceremos* celebrates the story of Scottish solidarity with the people of Chile following the fascist coup in September 1973 – exactly fifty years ago. This is a story of action – no better demonstrated than by the workers of Rolls Royce East Kilbride, whose boycott of engine work effectively grounded the Chilean Air Force. It is also a story of refugees, political exiles many of whom had suffered torture and imprisonment, who found themselves in Scotland where they were welcomed by the labour and trade union movement and helped to settle.

The event – organised by the publisher Calton Books and the author Colin Turbett , will feature short contributions from Chilean representatives, trade unionists and others. Details will be added here once confirmed.

This is a FREE event but tickets are limited to 50.

Monday 4 Sep 2023 18:30 – 20:00

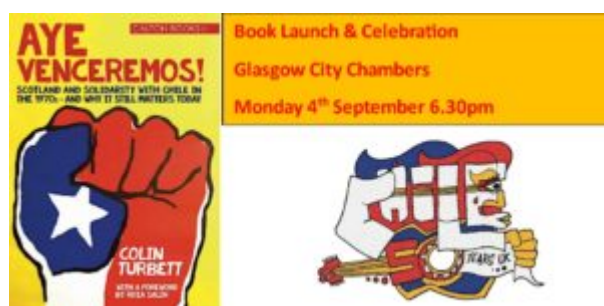
Location: Glasgow City Chambers 82 George Square Glasgow G2 1DU

Register here:

[Aye Venceremos – Book Launch & Anniversary Celebration – Glasgow 4th Sept. Tickets, Mon 4 Sep 2023 at 18:30 | Eventbrite](#)

Aye Venceremos – Scotland and Solidarity with Chile in the 1970s – and why it still matters today is published by Calton Books, Glasgow at £10. It can be purchased here :

<https://www.calton-books.co.uk/books/ayе-venceremos-scotland-and-solidarity-with-chile-in-the-1970s-and-why-it-still-matters-today/>



Chile's victorious "new left" brings hope, but it's all to play for

Former student activist Gabriel Boric, 35, will become the youngest president in Latin American history when he takes over as Chile's head of state this March *writes Franck Gaudichaud*. But with capital already taking flight and the right on the rise across the continent, he isn't in for an easy ride.

Many Chileans breathed a sigh of relief on the night of 19 December – not just in the headquarters of the Chilean left but also in their homes and on social media – at news of the electoral defeat of the reactionary neoliberal far right,

nostalgic for the old dictatorship (1973-89). José Antonio Kast had lost the presidential race to the leftwing coalition Apruebo Dignidad (AD, Approve Dignity), led by Gabriel Boric, an alliance of the Communist Party (PC), Frente Amplio (Broad Front, FA) and regional green parties. Crowds rejoiced in the streets of Santiago and nationwide. The sounds of car horns and singing went on late into the night. The former laboratory of neoliberalism had turned to the left.

The result had not been a foregone conclusion, however, given the high number of undecided voters. In the first round 53% of the electorate didn't vote, confirming a trend observed since Chile's transition to democracy in 1990 and especially pronounced since the end of compulsory voting in 2012: a huge abstention rate and growing disenchantment with a democratisation process characterised by uninterrupted neoliberalism and many lingering legacies from the dictatorship.

Between the two rounds of voting, Boric's campaign team tried to reach out beyond Santiago's middle-class, his core demographic, to remoter parts of the country, including rural areas and poor neighbourhoods. Their aim was to mobilise the abstainers and close the gap in areas where Kast had received strong support. It worked: turnout jumped to almost 56% in the second round, and for the first time over eight million Chileans voted. Boric beat Kast by more than ten points.

Boric's campaign manager Izkia Siches, 35, played a decisive role in this winning strategy, successfully revitalising the campaign. Siches, who was president of Colmed, the Chilean Medical College, during the pandemic, is known for her opposition to the incumbent president Sebastián Piñera's health policy. Early election data suggests that women, the working class and the young were the key factor behind the victory, contributing significantly to the almost one million difference in votes between the candidates. The left did especially well in Santiago's poor western districts, scoring

over 70% in some of them. Estimates indicate that 68% of women under 30 voted for Boric, while Kast won among people over 70 [1]

The first-round result was a surprise: Kast, a 55-year-old ultraconservative Catholic lawyer and father of nine, came first with 28%, ahead of Boric on 25.8%. However, hope of a decisive Boric victory remained, given his exceptional trajectory over the past decade: he had begun in the autonomous left of the 2000s, then led the University of Chile Student Federation (FECH) in 2011, during the great mobilisation of young people for “free, public, quality” education.

Reformist and post-neoliberal

He entered parliament in 2013 as an independent without any party support, an achievement in the Chilean electoral system, which favours coalitions of centrist parties over independents. He was then re-elected alongside figures from the student movement such as Camila Vallejo of the Communist Party and Giorgio Jackson, who became his right-hand man. Boric and Jackson co-founded the FA in 2017, strategically positioning it between the historical Communist left, whose touchstones were Castro and Bolívar, and the traditional parties of the old centre-left Concertación, the coalition of the Socialist Party and Christian Democrats which governed from 1990 to 2010 and was reviled for its faithful adherence to neoliberalism.

This institutional, frenteamplista (broad-front) “new left” which sought to be reformist and post-neoliberal, was a far cry both from the “radical left” label that the international press lazily applied to it and the accusations of communism in Chile’s dominant media. Winning the primaries against the very popular (and more leftwing) Communist mayor of Recoleta, Daniel Jadue, Boric and the FA saw their tactics pay off.

Boric's presidential manifesto contained a new fiscal policy aimed at taxing the wealthy and the big companies to fund social reforms. These included public health; education; the return of the pension system (privatised by General Pinochet) to state control; the legalisation of abortion and the promotion of the rights of women and sexual minorities; the quest for a greener economy; and the negotiation of new fundamental rights for the Mapuche people.

High turnout against far right

This platform successfully rallied people from far beyond Apruebo Dignidad. But the spectacular increase in turnout in the second round – especially in the cities, and in regions that had been hostile to the left in the first round (such as the northern port city of Antofagasta) – was above all a reaction to the emergence of the far right, at whose rallies pro-Pinochet chants were often sung. So some Chileans voted against Kast as much as for Boric, as demonstrated by the many declarations by social and feminist collectives and organisations, such as the Popular Assembly of La Granja in Santiago, which lent its support to “stand up to fascism”, without giving Boric carte blanche. [2]

In his first speech as president-elect, Boric stressed he would serve as president for all Chileans, and alluded to Salvador Allende, the socialist president who died in the 1973 coup. He also reiterated his support for the ongoing constitutional process, “a source of world pride”: “For the first time in our history we are writing a constitution in a democratic and equal manner ... Let us all take care of this process so that we have a Magna Carta that is a meeting point and not a source of division.”

Following the October 2020 referendum and the election of a Constitutional Convention by universal suffrage last May, Chile is at last on track to replace the 1980 constitution

inherited from Pinochet. [3] The traditional centre-left and centre-right parties are in a minority in this body, which is dominated by independents (partly from social movements, especially feminist and indigenous peoples' organisations) and representatives of the left from the PC and the FA. Kast, by contrast, has consistently expressed a wish to scupper the constitutional project.

Boric has said he plans to implement "structural changes without leaving anyone behind; grow economically; convert what are for many consumer goods into social rights regardless of wallet size", but he has also sought to reassure his opponents by promising to be "responsible". In the period between the two rounds of the election he reorientated his programme towards the centre, angering the Communists.

Boric began to look more like the parties in the former Concertación, even adding some of their most prominent economists to his team – such as the former head of Chile's central bank Roberto Zahler and the ultra-liberal Ricardo Ffrench-Davis – to try to "reassure the markets". In addition to seeking the support of former social-liberal presidents Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet, Boric addressed business leaders at its Enade 2021 convention.

Crisis in "neoliberal paradise"

Having committed to respecting the austerity budget for 2022 passed by Congress, he revised his fiscal ambitions downwards: his plans to raise new taxes have progressively gone from the equivalent of 8% of GDP over two mandates to a much more modest objective of 5% over four or five years, depending on the economic growth rate. This change was presented as a sign of his fiscal "responsibility" and determination to control inflation. But the issue of inequality (the richest 1% capture about a third of Chile's income), precarity and debt are at the root of the crisis in this "neoliberal paradise". [4] The

themes of crime and drug trafficking also appeared in Boric's speeches, a response to Kast's successful deployment of the language of security.

According to New York Times journalist Binyamin Appelbaum, what Gabriel Boric is defending is simply "social democracy"; in no sense could his project be called "communist". [5] Despite the – often fake – alarm of Kast supporters, Boric has never mentioned the possibility of even partial nationalisation of the country's vast natural resources, currently in the hands of the multinationals and bourgeois exporters. Chile possesses huge lithium and copper deposits, but Boric has spoken only of increasing the "royalties" that private operators pay. Allende nationalised copper, which he called "Chile's salary", but that doesn't feature in the programme of this "new left", and its Communist allies don't believe that the time is yet right to raise the question of nationalisations.

Despite the victorious coalition's caution, some of the elite still regard it suspiciously. The stock market and the currency both plunged at the news of the result. The day after the election, Ignacio Walker, a former Christian Democrat minister and paragon of "Chilean-style" neoliberalism, expressed concern about whether the "social democratic" and "reformist" orientation of the newly elected government – which he welcomed – would turn out to be a façade for a return to the "'refounding' zeal that has characterised the Communist Party and the Broad Front parties". [6]

The Communists' participation in the government is a cause for concern in high places, and for some it raises the spectre of a return to the "Chilean path to socialism" and Popular Unity, the coalition that backed Allende (1970-73). However, the PC has insisted it will respect Boric's commitments, as when it showed moderation in joining the "New Majority" at the start of Michelle Bachelet's second term (2014-18).

‘Social peace and the new constitution’

Some of the social movements of the left have criticised Boric, as they are less concerned than he is with achieving consensus. As a result, the label of amarillo (yellow) has sometimes stuck to him. He has indeed remained vague on the Mapuche question (especially their right to self-determination and the restitution of ancestral lands) and the issue of labour law. He has opted not to support the proposal for a general amnesty for those the social movements refer to as the “political prisoners of the revolt” (of October 2019), some of whom have been in prison or under house arrest for two years without trial.

This inevitably brings up the president-elect’s controversial role in the protests of October 2019, an explosion of rage at the “neoliberal model” that nearly toppled the Piñera government and was met with a level of state repression unseen since 1990. Boric is one of the deputies who in November 2019 helped devise the agreement for “social peace and the new constitution”, which was signed by the right and centrists but rejected by the PC and some of the FA, who condemned it as a stitch-up that ignored the will of the protesters. Some activists regard this agreement, which enabled the establishment of the Constitutional Convention, as a lifeline for Piñera and an attempt to channel the protests into institutions while the country was in a state of emergency.

A month later, Boric also voted for the even more controversial “anti-barricade law”, which gave legal backing to state repression at a time when the police’s human rights abuses were being severely criticised at home and abroad. Boric and his FA colleagues later apologised for voting with the right. Finally, in a region where the left shows unconditional support for the Cuban revolution, some saw Boric’s support for the 2021 Cuban anti-government protests as

a betrayal.

The spirit of rebellion of October 2019 is very much alive in Chilean society. It was evident in the slogans the crowd chanted as they celebrated the left's victory on the streets and in Santiago's renamed Dignity Square on 19 December. And even if the territorial assemblies have lost their dynamism after months of pandemic and economic crisis, many demands for social justice remain and the fire of revolt is still smouldering.

The new president, who's a former activist and excellent organiser, knows this. He has promised a "fairer Chile" and "to extend social rights", while acknowledging that "the days ahead will not be easy"... Already, the country is experiencing considerable capital flight, which will reduce his room for manoeuvre. He will have to deal with a legislature that will be largely hostile, because even though the old parties were excluded from the second round of the presidential election after finishing third and fourth in the first round, they maintain their presence at municipal and regional level and in Congress.

Tough negotiations ahead

The right won a Senate majority in November's parliamentary election. The lower house is split between the left/centre-left and right/far-right. The parliamentary left is stronger, especially the Communists (with 12 seats) and Apruebo Dignidad, with 37 (in a 155-seat body), while at the same time it has consolidated its municipal base in key cities such as central Santiago, Valparaíso, Viña del Mar and Valdivia. But progressive politicians face tough negotiations over any major reform with the centrists and the parties of the former Concertación coalition, which Boric has long disdained and which remains hostile to any significant change.

And though Kast has just lost a battle, he is far from defeated. His rise may only just be beginning. That, at any

rate, was his message to his supporters on the night of his defeat. The “Chilean Bolsonaro” wants to keep making advances: as the brother of an economy minister under the dictatorship and son of a German Nazi, he might seem a throwback to the old authoritarianism of the 1980s.

But that would be to underestimate a phenomenon at work throughout Latin America: the emergence of radical rightwingers, who mobilise moral discourse, the evangelical churches and Catholic hardliners, xenophobic agitation against migrants and fear of feminist gains and the LGBTQ movement. Kast congratulated himself for entering parliament in force with 15 deputies (and one senator), at a time when the traditional right retains its hegemony in the conservative arena, even if it has decreased from 72 to 53 deputies.

Undoubtedly, the Chilean people have won an important victory, which explains this election’s regional and global impact. But now the real work begins.

Source: Translated by George Miller for [Le Monde diplomatique \(English edition\)](#).

Footnotes

[1] *La Tercera*, Santiago de Chile, 20 December 2021

[2] Marco Teruggi, ‘De la abstención al voto anti-Kast: las razones de protagonistas del estallido’ (Abstaining from the anti-Kast vote), *Sputnik Mundo*, 17 December 2021.

[3] See Franck Gaudichaud, ‘Who wins in Chile’s new constitution?’, *Le Monde diplomatique*, English edition, April 2021.

[4] See Luis Sepúlveda, ‘Chile, no peaceful oasis’, *Le Monde diplomatique*, English edition, January 2020.

[5] *Diario Financiero*, Santiago, 8 December 2021.

[6] *El Mostrador*, Santiago, 20 December 2021.

Franck Gaudichaud

Franck Gaudichaud is professor of Latin American history at the University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès (France). His books on Latin America include *Chili 1970-1973. Mille jours qui changèrent le monde*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013. He is co-president of the association France Latin America and participates in the editorial committees of the site www.rebellion.org and of Contretemps magazine (France).

Reprinted from International Viewpoint, 13 January 2022, <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7478>