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Chile

A new Constitution is rejected again: back to square one in Chile?

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On Sunday 17 December 2023, for the second time in just over a year, Chileans were called upon to vote in a referendum “for” or “against” a new Constitution, which would put an end to the one enacted in 1980 during the Pinochet dictatorship (and reformed several times since 1989).

This new national election is taking place four years after the major social uprising of 2019, and two years after the election of the young president of the progressive left (a coalition comprising the Communist Party and Frente Amplio), Gabriel Boric. Once again, the more than 15 million voters came out clearly against the constitutional proposal: 55.8% were against it.

A class vote

Once again, in the capital, as nationally, there was a class rejection, while the three richest municipalities in the country voted “for”. Only two regions voted in favour of the constitutional proposal. However, big business and its media invested heavily in the “for” campaign, in order to defend a project that is even more reactionary than the existing Carta Magna. Drafted by the far right and the right wing in a process that was much more “controlled” by the traditional parties than the previous one, the proposal prevented any legislation in favour of abortion, protected the system of funded pension funds, consolidated the commodification of water, education and health, and set in stone one of the most conservative labour codes in Latin America.

A defeat for the far right

In September 2022, more than 62% of the population had already rejected a constitutional proposal. At the time, it was a rather left-wing, feminist text that defended new rights for indigenous peoples and sought to move beyond - in part - the neoliberal subsidiary state. Despite the differences, and against a backdrop that is now gloomy, dominated by talk of security and economic difficulties, a massive rejection was once again expressed on Sunday: the ongoing crisis of hegemony is far from over.

José Antonio Kast’s Republican Party, an extreme right-wing party that has emerged strongly over the last three years, and which has built its position on a return to “order”, also suffered a major defeat with this vote. Especially as Kast already saw himself as the new president from 2027. The knives are out between the traditional right-wing coalition (Chile Vamos) and the Republican clan, each seeking to claim responsibility for the debacle.

Overall, this result gives a breath of “fresh air” to a progressive government which, since 2021, has been characterised by a lack of transformative capacity and, above all, no desire - even minimal - to confront the dominant sectors. With a minority in parliament, locked into a managerial logic and allied with the social-liberal Socialist Party, Gabriel Boric immediately called for “national consensus” while closing the door on any continuation of a constituent process. In this context, only a revitalisation of the rebellious spirit of October and of the popular, indigenous and feminist struggles could reshuffle the cards and reopen an emancipatory horizon.

21 December 2023

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Translated by *International Viewpoint* from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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