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Our Position on the Constitutional Plebiscite

Santiago Anarchist Federation

September 4, 2022

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Beginning in late 2019, millions of people began taking to the streets across Chile. Initially sparked by a student protest against public transit fare hikes, the mass demonstrations soon took on a popular character, with participants demanding redress for decades of stark social inequality. Massive marches and pitched battles with the police took place over a period of months, during which thousands were arrested, injured, maimed, and some even killed. As well, in the midst of the uprising, neighborhood assemblies were constructed and an ecosystem of social activity emerged.

Unable to contain the social upheaval, Chile's then president Sebastián Piñera offered a national referendum on the question of entirely rewriting the country's dictatorship era constitution. With 78% of voters in favor, the process of drafting a new constitution began in 2021 and was completed in mid 2022. Now, on September 4th, Chileans will go to the polls to decide whether to accept or reject the constitutional convention's draft document.

We share here a translation of a public opinion letter on these events, produced by our Chilean sister organization Federación Anarquista Santiago (FAS).

Note: The positions articulated here do not necessarily reflect those of Black Rose / Rosa Negra as an organization.

In our political organization we understand that the primordial questions of the class struggle cannot be resolved in a juridical-institutional framework, therefore, no constitution will resolve the problems that affect our emancipation. That is why we characterize this process as the restitution of state power, which, in the face of an evident crisis of the social pact imposed by the coordinated transition in the post-dictatorship period, sought to give oxygen to the system of domination. Hence we conceptualize the above as a “restitution process”. In short, the task of the convention was to update the limits of our oppression and exploitation, in order to revalidate our submission to the ruling class.

The text emanating from the Convention left much of its content up to the laws and regulations to be approved by Congress, that is to say, to reformism, consolidating its Concertationist¹ spirit. It made a constitutional proposal with decrees and principles but its final content and implementation will depend on Congress, which will lead us, once again, to a feedback loop of clientelism and extortion, where the parties of “approvalism”² will call on the popular sectors to vote for them, under the promise that “yes, now yes” the longed-for dignity will come. And if the above were not enough, the governing parties have already agreed on changes to the constitutional proposal, if it wins the upcoming election. Therefore, those decrees and principles that have generated most controversy in the party of order should already be understood as discounted, since their repeal has already been promised.

We believe that overthrowing the constitution of the Dictatorship and its legacy allows us to improve the conditions of struggle. However, we understand that it is only a symbol, full of “small letters,” which alone will not guarantee a dignified life for our communities, since the pillars of Pinochetism³ and conservatism are not only anchored in the Constitution but are intrinsic to the economic and social model that will not be overthrown by voting, on the contrary, it will be through the effective capacity we have in social organizations that we will build, through struggle, the new world that we carry in our hearts. However, various social and political organizations abandoned the flags of direct action raised during the Social Revolt, even becoming part of the government of Gabriel Boric. In this way, organizations that at one time sought a radical transformation in our lives and fomented struggle and popular protagonism, have assumed the political theses of reformism, aiming to confront neoliberalism through the democratic opening and the construction of a new type of state.

This has translated into giving all their organizational and militant efforts to the electoral process, abandoning the work of strengthening social organization. Consequently, this September 4 is intended to turn the page, to leave the Social Revolt behind: that is the wager of the party of order, which puts us in a complex post-plebiscite scenario; the hollowing out of streets and popular protest will be deepened in exchange for concentrating efforts on implementation and institutional capture. For us, this is a serious mistake, given that we lose political autonomy and the construction of a social force with the capacity to fight, our two main tools for opening up contested scenarios. This political context, which is otherwise risky, can leave us facing a supposed tactical victory, such as the collapse of the constitution of the dictatorship, but clearly it is, above all, a strategic defeat that represents the demobilization and weakening of social and political organizations.

Finally, in the face of electoral opportunism and the pacification of social conflict, which has only benefited progressivism, a kind of “post-revolt depression” has been generated — dignity has not become a habit but apparently resignation has. Due to the above, rather than returning to a position that we have made quite clear since 2019 regarding the restitution process, we want to focus on presenting a reflection and appeal to social and organized anarchism: we believe that after experiencing a sharpening of the class struggle since the Social Revolt, it is intolerable that we continue to set the pace. It is no use clinging religiously to ideological principles, especially when reality is tremendously complex and contradictory, that is why we must dare, we must be uncomfortable, we must set fire to sectarianism, we must abandon contemplation and contribute to the consolidation of a real revolutionary project, otherwise we will continue to hold positions in the air that contribute little or nothing to the emancipation of our class.

We believe it is necessary to reactivate popular protest and organization, rejecting the institutional siren songs and challenging the pusillanimous positions of those who prefer to remain silent in the face of abuses and injustices in order to “protect Approval.” Our path is one of struggle, not of conciliation, we are invested in conflict but without a concrete political project it will be nothing more than an empty slogan. Therefore, our proposal is to strengthen social organizations and community management in terms of rupture for the construction of Self-managing Revolutionary Power, which is nothing more than the capacities and forces necessary to advance towards the construction of organized communities and territorial control, in order to, in this way, throw the bourgeoisie and its world into the dustbin of history.

No constitution will end domination
To strengthen struggle and organization
Freedom for political prisoners