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Another Blow to Piñera: Opponents will Control the Constitutional Convention

By: Arnaldo Musa / Special for CubaSi  
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Chilean President Sebastián Piñera admitted on Sunday that his government and the country's traditional political parties are not "adequately tuning in to the demands and desires of the citizens."

Even unaware of the final results of the elections held last Saturday and this Sunday, the independent candidates and progressive opposition parties will be the majority in the assembly that will draft a new constitution and leave behind the one created during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, of who the present Sebastián Piñera is a confessed admirer.

The traditional parties, especially those of the right wing, were cornered in the Constituent Convention that will create new game rules in a country controlled by a neoliberal economic model.

Nearly 90% of the votes counted, the traditional political class received a hard blow, mainly the right-wing coalition of the government of President Sebastián Piñera, who had been very confident of being able to control a third of the future Constituent Convention, which will have 155 people elected equally and with the inclusion of 17 seats reserved for indigenous peoples.

"In these elections, citizens have sent us a clear and strong message to the government and also to all traditional political forces: we are not adequately tuning in to the demands and desires of the citizens and we are being challenged by new expressions and new leaderships. "Piñera acknowledged in a message to the country, accompanied by his entire cabinet in the patio of La Moneda presidential palace, in Santiago.

The elections were the continuation of the plebiscite of last October, in which 80% of Chileans who voted chose that a new Magna Carta be written to replace the one inherited from the dictatorship.

Let's remember that this Constitution is indicated as the origin of the social inequality that generated the massive protests that broke out in October 2019.

Almost 15 million people were called to vote in these elections, where mayors, councilors, and regional governors were also elected.

The two lists that bring together candidates ranging from the center-left to the Communist Party, the List Approve and Approve Dignity, obtain 33.22% of the votes, while the one on the right, Vamos por Chile, gets 20.80%. The independents prevail over the traditional parties with about 40% of the vote and would be able to control the future Constituent Convention.

Many of these independents have center-left political affinities, and 60% are from traditional parties, which include the Communist Party and the traditional left.

The event had to take place over two days due to the widespread COVID-19 epidemic, for which 14.9 million Chileans were summoned, in order to choose from among more than 22,000 candidates 345 mayors, 2 252 councilors, and 345 candidates, and 16 regional governors.

From the ruling party they already feared that the popularity debacle in which President Sebastián Piñera is plunged, whose government is rejected by more than 90% of the population, would drag the right-wing coalition candidates with which he returned to power in March 2018.

## The Core

But, undoubtedly, the main attraction was to elect the 155 members of the Constituent Convention, who will have a maximum period of two years to draft a new Constitution, which will have to be approved in a plebiscite; as well as that of the 16 regional governors who, now, through popular vote, will replace the mayors who were appointed

The change of the Constitution was one of the main demands during the protests that broke out in October 2019 in Chile.

The current Chilean Magna Carta dates from 1980 and, although modified several times, it's criticized for being the inheritance of the military regime of Augusto Pinochet and for consolidating a residual role of the State in the provision of basic services.

It promotes private enterprise in all sectors of the economy, including education, health, and pensions, in a country that, although it has the highest per capita in Latin America, is also classified as one of the most unequal among advanced economies.

Thus, it will be the first time that Chilean society will reform the Constitution inherited from the dictatorship that Augusto Pinochet established for 16 years.

It will also be the first time worldwide that a Constitution is drawn up equally by men and women, since the integration of the Convention guarantees so.

In the case of the aforementioned election of the 16 governors, for which 90 candidates are running, pessimism predominates in the ruling coalition **Vamos Chile** because, since the social outbreak of 2019, Piñera has remained in a state of permanent political weakness.

In recent weeks, the president suffered a new internal defeat when he had to accept the third withdrawal of pension funds that Congress had approved, and that he rejected until the last minute. The polls coincide in the great part with the negative assessment of his government. And he has just been accused of crimes against humanity in the International Court of The Hague for the police violence registered during the already historic protests of 2019.

The panorama that the ruling party fears the most is that Piñera faces the final stretch of his presidency with more than 80% of the regions governed by the opposition. His bet is that there will be no definitions and that the majority of governorships will be settled in the second round, which, in Chile's hectic electoral year, is scheduled for June 13<sup>th</sup>.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff

