

Optimism wins

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By Guillermo Alvarado

With the most vigorous turnout in recent years, the Chilean people elected this Sunday as their next president Gabriel Boric, from the progressive coalition Apruebo Dignidad, and drove away the ghost of Pinochet's dictatorship that was flying over the southern country.

It was not for nothing that this process was described as the most important and significant elections since the fall of the coup regime, because one of the alternatives, represented by the far-right José Antonio Kast, proposed a leap back to the past, whose scars are still present in that society.

Kast went to the polls on behalf of the Republican Party, not the one in the United States but the one in Chile, but which has few differences with respect to the one that took Donald Trump to the White House, one of the mentors of the South American politician together with the Brazilian Jair Bolsonaro.

To try to do so, he joined a Christian sector characterized by an almost medieval fundamentalism, especially with regard to women's rights and the recognition of sexual diversity.

The danger was not minor, especially because Kast won the first round of the presidential vote with two points over Boric and was threatening to repeat, supported by the traditional right.

As it was said at the time, the only real alternative to avoid this tragedy, which would not only be Chilean but of all Latin America and the Caribbean, was to mobilize young people and a part of the indifferent, as finally happened.

According to official reports, more than 8.3 million citizens participated in this round, of which 4.6 million voted for Boric, who became not only the youngest president-elect in history, at the age of 35, but also the most voted in recent decades.

The task ahead will not be easy, as the new ruler will have to lead the popular referendum to approve the new Constitution, which will replace the one inherited from the Pinochet dictatorship and which will represent the pillars, the cornerstone, of a different country.

On the other hand, it will be up to him to reactivate the economy after the covid-19 pandemic, on a different basis from the neoliberal doctrine currently in use.

Restructuring the security apparatus, including the dreaded carabineros, restoring the population's confidence in its authorities, reforming the pension system and guaranteeing the universality of public services, including education and health, must be on the agenda.

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