

Chile 2026: Crisis of Hegemony, the Splintering of the Left, and the Reconquest of Neoliberal Common Sense *A Gramscian and Leninist essay on the contemporary political, economic, and social conjuncture*

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*Each time Neruda says party
he says political irresponsibility
and each time he says political irresponsibility
he says party
Neruda is a bourgeois artist
and the Communist Party an exploiter of a bourgeois artist
who does not exploit him
— Pablo de Rokha, Epitaph for Neruda (1948)*

Abstract

This article analyses the socio-economic and political situation in Chile from March 2026, when the far-right candidate José Antonio Kast assumed the presidency following the collapse of the post-uprising cycle. Through a theoretical framework that articulates Gramscian concepts—organic crisis, historical bloc, war of position, and common sense—with the Leninist perspective of *What Is to Be Done?* on class consciousness, economism, and conscious leadership, it is argued that Chile is traversing an unresolved organic crisis of the post-transition historical bloc. The piece specifically examines the reformist drift of the Communist Party of Chile (PCCh) in contrast to the anti-revisionist strategy of the Communist Party of Chile (Proletarian Action) and its attempt to construct an alternative front through the Unión Patriótica (UPA). It concludes that the defeat of 2026 does not represent a conventional electoral turn, but rather the restoration of a hegemony of domination sustained by fear, made possible by the left's inability to conquer both civil society and the state apparatus in an articulated manner.

Keywords: hegemony, organic crisis, historical bloc, war of position, vanguard, common sense, neoliberalism, Chile, Antonio Gramsci, Lenin.

1. Introduction

In March 2026, the presidential victory of José Antonio Kast with 58 per cent of the vote in the second round marked the end of a political cycle opened by the social uprising of October 2019 and administered, without hegemonic success, by Gabriel Boric's governing coalition (2022–2026). The rapid succession of events—two failed constituent processes, public debt rising from 35.8 to 42.3 per cent of GDP, the implementation of compulsory voting, and the incorporation of between four and five million new voters with high religiosity and low party identification—configures a scenario that cannot be explained through merely conjunctural or electoral analysis.

This paper proposes that Chile is experiencing an **organic crisis** of the post-transition historical bloc: a structural fracture in the relations between the economic base, the state apparatus, and the cultural superstructure that has found neither a progressive solution nor a definitive restoration. From this diagnosis, the article articulates two theoretical traditions rarely read jointly in contemporary Latin American analysis: Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Lenin's theory of the vanguard and class consciousness. If Gramsci allows us to read the crisis in the duration of culture and civil society, Lenin—in *What Is to Be Done?* (1902)—compels us to interrogate the absence of conscious, organised leadership capable of transforming spontaneous indignation into an alternative political project.

The article is structured in five parts. First, it characterises the contemporary Chilean socio-economic and political landscape. Second, it develops the Gramscian analysis of the crisis of the historical bloc, the war of position, and common sense. Third, it incorporates the Leninist reading on economism, spontaneity, and the necessity of the vanguard. Fourth, it discusses the specific case of the Chilean left's split: the PCCh as an expression of institutional reformism, and the PC(AP) alongside the UPA as an attempt to construct an alternative front. Finally, it presents integrated conclusions and a strategic call directed at the country's anti-capitalist forces.

2. The Scenario: From a “Crisis of Plausibility” to the Return of Kast

In March 2026, **José Antonio Kast**, a far-right candidate, assumed the presidency with 58 per cent of the vote in the second round, defeating communist candidate Jeannette Jara. His arrival in power marks the end of a brief political opening initiated by the October 2019 social uprising and the government of Gabriel Boric (2022–2026). Various analysts note that this was not a “sudden mass conversion to the right,” but rather the collapse of the credibility of the economic model inherited from the transition, which researcher Mauricio Rifo has termed a **“crisis of plausibility.”**

From a Gramscian optic, this resembles less a conventional electoral victory and more a **hegemonic reconquest amid an organic crisis**. Gramsci distinguishes between a conjunctural crisis (passing, economic) and an organic crisis (structural, affecting the relations between the state and civil society, between base and superstructure). Chile is living through an organic crisis of the post-transition historical bloc.

3. The Economic Dimension: Debt, Austerity, and Neoliberal Restoration

The Boric government left public debt that had grown from 35.8 to 42.3 per cent of GDP. The new Kast government has successfully installed the diagnosis of a “cursed inheritance” of fiscal irresponsibility, justifying what international media have described as **“the most regressive economic project since the return to democracy in 1990.”** Leaked official documents suggested cuts and “discontinuities” to social programmes—from school meals to the Guaranteed Universal Pension—questioning the very idea of “social rights” with which even the centre-right had become familiar after the Concertación.

From Gramsci, this is a clear example of **economic hegemony** converted into political project. The “direction” (*direzione*) of society is exercised not only through state coercion but through the capacity to present cuts as “reform,” as technical “common sense.” The Minister of Finance, Jorge Quiroz, was forced to explain semantically the word “discontinuity,” revealing the effort to maintain the appearance

of technical rationality while social conquests are dismantled. This is **ideology as the “cement”** of a historical bloc in reconstruction.

4. The Political Dimension: The Double Constituent Failure and Anti-Politics

Chile is perhaps the only country in the world to have rejected two constitutional proposals by referendum in less than two years. The first (2022), of a progressive character and linked to the social uprising, was rejected by two-thirds. The second (2023), drafted by a Constitutional Council dominated by Kast's Republican Party and described as a “Kastitution,” was also rejected by 55.7 per cent.

For Gramsci, a Constitution is not merely a juridical norm; it is the **document of a hegemony**, the “form” that consent takes at a given moment. The double rejection reveals something profound: **no political bloc succeeded in articulating a new “historical bloc” capable of synthesising the interests of the majorities into a convincing narrative.** The left failed to transform the energy of the uprising into hegemony; the right also failed to impose its conservative vision as national common sense.

Thus emerges a **crisis of authority** in the Gramscian sense: civil society (social movements, media, churches, trade unions) fails to connect organically with the state. The result is what analysts have called a massive **anti-political** sentiment, expressed in the slogan “que se jodan todos” (“to hell with all of them”). Gramsci spoke of common sense as a chaotic aggregate of world-conceptions; in Chile, that common sense has become **cynical, distrustful of all political mediation**, which is not emancipatory but, dangerously, fertile ground for an authoritarianism of “law and order.”

5. The Social Dimension: The Uprising Without Revolution and Compulsory Voting

The October 2019 uprising expressed a fracture between the masses and the dominant historical bloc. Millions took to the streets with a demand that synthesised what Gramsci would call a **crisis of moral and intellectual legitimacy** of the ruling class: “Chile despertó” (“Chile woke up”). However, the left—particularly Boric’s coalition, composed of former student movements, the Communist Party of Chile (PCCCh), and remnants of the Concertación—failed to channel that energy into a “war of position.”

Gramsci contrasts the **war of movement** (frontal assault, insurrection) with the **war of position** (the slow conquest of the ideological, cultural, and institutional trenches of civil society). The Chilean left attempted a constitutional war of movement (two constituent processes in four years) without having first won the cultural battle in civil society. The result was a defeat on enemy terrain: the right, better entrenched in the media, corporations, professional guilds, and families, managed to make the masses reject even a Constitution drafted by their own representatives.

The implementation of **compulsory voting** incorporated between four and five million new voters with low identification with the left-right axis, high religiosity, traditionalist positions on social issues, and strong anti-elitism. Gramsci would have seen in them an expression of the “people” as a passive subject of history, whose common sense has yet to be conquered by organic intellectuals who speak their language.

6. Gramscian Analysis: Culture, Hegemony, and the Historical Bloc

6.1 The Organic Crisis of the Post-Transition Historical Bloc

The “Chilean model”—the alliance between neoliberal dictatorship and Concertación democracy—functioned as a **historical bloc** for three decades. The Concertación and the right (in their variants) alternated in government but preserved the core: privatisation, AFP pension funds, flexible labour markets, a subsidiary state. Gramsci would say this was a bloc led by a **ruling class** (businessmen, technocrats, centrist politicians) that exercised a **passive hegemony**: consensus was based on growth and poverty reduction, not on the active participation of the masses.

The 2019 uprising demonstrated that this bloc could no longer reproduce itself. However, the organic crisis was not resolved by a new progressive hegemony; rather, Kast’s right succeeded in **recomposing the historical bloc** by appealing to fear, order, and the restoration of an idealised past. This is what Gramsci would call an **inverted “passive revolution”**: not a modernisation from above, but a conservative restoration that avoids revolutionary rupture by channelling social disintegration towards a new market authoritarianism.

6.2 The Cultural Battle and Organic Intellectuals

Gramsci insisted that all hegemony is, ultimately, **cultural**. The Chilean right never abandoned the cultural trenches: media, traditional universities, churches, elite schools. The left, for its part, had brilliant organic intellectuals in the student movements, but failed to penetrate the “terrain” of the family, the school, the parish, the neighbourhood.

Kast’s discourse—“law and order,” repression of crime, trade unions and migration, repeal of progressive policies—is a discourse directed at the most reactionary **common sense** of the subaltern, at their “conformism” in the face of fear. Gramsci distinguished between “common sense” (inherited,

incoherent, often reactionary) and “good sense” (the latent critical capacity of the masses). The task of transformative politics is to elevate good sense; the right, conversely, anchors itself in the lowest common sense.

6.3 Civil Society and the Integral State

The failure of the two constituent processes shows that in Chile, **civil society** is stronger than the state apparatus in terms of veto power. The people can reject from below what politicians agree upon above. But that force is, for Gramsci, **dispersed, molecular**, not articulated into an alternative project. The right understands this better: it does not need a new Constitution to govern; it suffices to control the state (Presidency, Congress, courts) and let civil society wear itself out in atomisation.

The Kast government thus represents a **hegemony of “domination” rather than “direction”**: less active consensus, more coercion and fear. But Gramsci warned that a hegemony based solely on force is fragile. The challenge for the future will be whether the social discontent—which did not disappear, only was silenced—manages to reorganise itself into a new war of position.

7. Leninist Perspective: *What Is to Be Done?*, PCCh Reformism, the PCR, Vanguardia Comunista, and the PC(AP)

If Gramsci teaches us to read the crisis in the duration of cultural hegemony, Lenin—in *What Is to Be Done?*—compels us to ask about **conscious leadership, organisation, and class consciousness**, which every revolutionary transformation requires. Applying this lens to Chile in 2026 reveals not merely an absence, but a complex **historical split** in the Chilean left: on one hand, the **Communist Party of Chile (PCCh)**, integrated into the post-transition historical bloc; on the other, a line of anti-revisionist splits branching into the **Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR)**, and finally the **Communist Party of Chile (Proletarian Action) or PC(AP)**, which emerged in a later sequence and not as a direct split from the PCCh.

7.1 The PCCh: From Reformism to the “Apruebo Dignidad” Government

Lenin holds an uncomfortable but inescapable thesis: **the labour movement by itself generates only trade-unionist consciousness**, that is, immediate economic demands (better wages, pensions, cheap transport), but not socialist or revolutionary consciousness. Political consciousness must be brought to the masses **“from outside”**, by a party of organised revolutionary intellectuals. The PCCh, founded in 1922 and deeply rooted in organised labour, survived the dictatorship and the transition, but paid a price that is intolerable from a Leninist standpoint: **it transformed itself into a reformist party of the system**. Its participation in the Concertación, the New Majority, and finally “Apruebo Dignidad” alongside the Frente Amplio led it to administer the state inherited from Pinochet rather than destroy it. During the Boric government, it held ministries and backed a management that ultimately preserved the neoliberal core: AFP pension funds, mixed health model, regressive taxation.

From Lenin, this is **pure economism**: it confused administering the state with conquering political power. The PCCh attempted a constitutional “war of movement” without having won the “war of position” in civil society, acting as a **containment apparatus** of the system rather than a revolutionary vanguard.

7.2 The PC(AP): The UPA and the Attempt to Build an Alternative Bloc

Against this reformist drift, the anti-revisionist line of the PC(AP)—emerging in a later sequence after the PCR—maintained orthodox Leninist positions: Marxism-Leninism, rejection of bourgeois parliamentarism as the principal road, and defence of the insurrectional path. However, and this is crucial: **the PC(AP) did not retreat into isolated purity**. It created the **UPA (Unión Patriótica)** and invited external candidates not belonging to the party, demonstrating a tactical understanding that the vanguard cannot act alone and needs to articulate itself with broader forces in the popular camp.

This Leninist gesture—building fronts, not imposing acronyms—belies the caricature of a “vanguard without an army” talking to itself. The PC(AP) attempted, through the UPA, **to intervene in the electoral struggle not as an end in itself but as a tribune and a point of articulation**. The problem,

then, was not necessarily a voluntary sectarianism or an inability to connect with the masses due to ideological closed-mindedness. The problem was **structural and hegemonic**: in an electoral system designed to exclude minority forces without massive financing or media coverage, and at a moment when the institutional left (Frente Amplio-PCCh) occupied all the legitimate political space of “change,” the UPA faced almost insurmountable barriers to becoming a mass reference point.

From Gramsci, this illustrates a harsh truth: **it is not enough to have the correct tactic (the UPA as a front) if civil society has not been conquered beforehand.** The right controls the media, think tanks, churches, professional guilds; the institutional left controls the state apparatus and the progressive “government” narrative. On this board, the UPA was trapped between two blocs: denounced by the institutional left as “divisive” and silenced by the media as “marginal.” The PC(AP) had the correct intuition that an alternative historical bloc was needed, but attempted to build it **in the midst of an organic crisis already resolved in the enemy’s favour**, without previously conquered cultural trenches.

From Lenin, the lesson is different: **the UPA was a front attempt, but without the prior mass organisational base to sustain that front.** Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?* insists that the party must be the “organiser” of the entire working class, not merely of its cadres. The PC(AP) maintained militant press (*Acción Proletaria*, *Remolino Popular*) and cadre discipline, but failed to transform the UPA into a **mass organisation** with everyday territorial presence in neighbourhoods, trade unions, and shantytowns. The invitation to external candidacies was tactically correct, but did not generate the **social army** that every vanguard needs in order not to be merely a leadership without troops.

7.3 The Historical Split as Symptom of the Organic Crisis

The ramification—reformist PCCh → PCR → PC(AP) with UPA—is a **Gramscian symptom** of the organic crisis: the dominant historical bloc disintegrates, but the subaltern class fails to offer a unified hegemonic alternative. While the right maintains a relatively cohesive bloc (UDI, RN, Republican Party, media), the left is split between those who administer the state and those who attempt to build alternatives from outside without the conquered cultural trenches.

Lenin would have diagnosed an **absence of a real vanguard party** capable of intervening on all fronts. The PCCh intervenes in the “low” but renounces the “high”; the PC(AP) attempted to build the “high” (UPA) but failed to consolidate the “low” (molecular presence in civil society). Between them, and between the historical ramifications that separate them, social discontent floats without direction and is captured by the right as a protest vote.

8. A Particular Message to the PC(AP)

What you did well (and it is no small thing)

First, recognise it: **you did not fall into isolated sectarianism**. Creating the UPA and inviting external candidates demonstrated that you understand, at least tactically, a cardinal Leninist lesson: *a vanguard that presents itself to the people alone, without fronts, without concrete alliances, without listening before leading, is not a vanguard but a chapel*. That gesture was correct. The problem was not the head; it was **the body**.

The precise diagnosis

The PC(AP) has **cadres, press, discipline, theory, and memory**. What it lacks—and this is what Gramsci would have pointed out with crudeness—is a **social army in the territory**. The UPA was a tribune without an organised people behind it to sustain it in the streets, day after day, when the media erased it and the electoral service asphyxiated it. It was not voluntary sectarianism: it was a **disproportion between the height of the political direction and the depth of the roots**.

Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?* does not ask for purists preaching from the perfect tribune. He demands **professional organisers** who merge with the masses in every factory, every neighbourhood, every water conflict, every land seizure, every market. The PC(AP) speaks from the twentieth century to the twenty-first not because its theory is old—Marxist-Leninist theory remains the most precise microscope for viewing this disaster—but because **the way of speaking to the people remains tribune-based, not territory-based**.

The turn that Gramsci demands

The right did not win in 2026 because it lied better on television. It won because **it never stopped owning the school, the evangelical church, the corner-shop owner, the lorry radio, the family WhatsApp group.** That is civil society. And the PC(AP) cannot conquer it with leaflets or with a null vote, however strategically correct. It must **inhabit it.**

This means:

- **Stop competing with the institutional left for the media-legislative space**, where they have all the resources and you have none.
- **Start competing for the territorial space where they are not:** the abandoned shantytowns, the extractivist countryside, the neighbourhoods where the state only arrives with police, the communities where traditional medicine is more real than the private clinic.

The turn that Lenin demands

Lenin would not have said “abandon the UPA.” He would have said: **“Turn it into something that does not depend on electoral registration.”** The UPA must cease being an electoral front and become a **territorial resistance network:** water committees, community health committees, territorial defence committees, spaces where people do not go looking for a candidate, but to solve a concrete problem that the neoliberal state denies them.

The null vote with revolutionary content is correct as a strategic position vis-à-vis a bourgeois parliament, but **it cannot be the only form of contact with the masses.** If the only moment the PC(AP) meets the people is to tell them “do not vote,” the party becomes a moral spectator of history, not its organiser. One must be there when the people **are not voting:** when they are being evicted, when their child commits suicide over debt, when the mining company takes the water, when the mayor cuts their electricity.

The concrete call

The PC(AP) should be asking itself today, urgently:

- Where are the **water defence committees** that organise shantytown dwellers against drought and water privatisation?

- Where are the **community health spaces** that articulate traditional medicine with the denunciation of state abandonment?
- Where is the **peasant and territorial organisation** that defends the land not with a Marxist leaflet, but with the physical, everyday presence of militant and community together?

The party needs **militants who are market organisers, neighbourhood counsellors, defenders of the neighbourhood well**, who can talk about the price of bread and rent without sounding like a replacement for the traditional politician, but as the expression of a world-conception where land is not merchandise and the poor are not to blame for their poverty.

The synthesis

Do not abandon theory or the UPA. But understand that the UPA without a territorial army is like a Constitution without civil society: paper.

The call to action is this:

1. **Descend from the leaflet to the territory.** Every PC(AP) militant should have a concrete territorial task: a neighbourhood, a shantytown, a peasant community, a base-level trade union, where they do not go to “proselytise” but to **organise the solution of concrete problems** (water, land, territorial defence, against state-delivered crime).
2. **Build the social army before the next election or uprising.** Do not wait for the masses to return to the streets to appear with a flag. Be there when the masses are at home, suffering, so that when they come out, they already know who stood with them in the dark.
3. **Speak the people’s language, not the party’s language.** People do not need another perfect explanation of imperialism. They need to feel that the communist militant is the one who helped bury their mother, who defended the water well, who taught them that their territorial knowledge is not backwardness but resistance.
4. **Articulate the territorial with the revolutionary.** Peasant communities, the rural world, the relationship with the land, the defence of native forest against extractivism, are not “culture” for a folkloric radio programme. They are **trenches of a war of position**. If the PC(AP) fails to

speak from there, that symbolic territory will be left in the hands of the Christian right or neoliberal tourism.

9. Discussion

The findings of this article allow us to sustain that Kast's victory in 2026 does not constitute a full hegemonic victory, but rather a **reactionary restoration** based on the reconquest of neoliberal common sense through fear and coercion. This observation has theoretical and political implications that merit discussion on three planes: the diagnosis of the organic crisis, the debate on the vanguard in late neoliberalism, and the strategy for forces such as the PC(AP).

9.1 On the Organic Crisis and the Inverted “Passive Revolution”

The Gramscian concept of organic crisis proves operative for distinguishing what occurred in Chile from a mere electoral alternation. The post-transition historical bloc—which articulated formal democracy with a neoliberal economic structure—entered a crisis of reproducibility in 2019, but was not replaced by an alternative bloc. Instead, the right managed an **inverted passive revolution**: not a modernisation from above that anticipates popular demands, but a conservative restoration that postpones the resolution of the crisis through market authoritarianism. This confirms the Gramscian thesis that organic crises are not automatically resolved in favour of progressive forces; they can be channelled towards restoration if the subaltern class lacks historical direction.

This finding engages with Latin American literature on “post-neoliberalism” and the “new right,” but the specific contribution of the theoretical framework used here is to point out that the fragility of the Kast government does not reside in its parliamentary weakness, but in its character as a **hegemony of domination** (based on force and fear) rather than direction (based on active consensus). From this perspective, the strategic question is not when Kast will fall, but whether the left will be organised to offer an alternative hegemony when that domination exhausts itself.

9.2 On the Vanguard and Economism in the Twenty-First Century

The joint reading of Gramsci and Lenin allows us to overcome two frequent reductions in the left debate. On one hand, academic Gramscianism sometimes forgets that cultural hegemony cannot be conquered without a political organisation capable of centralising the experience and memory of struggle; on the other, a certain militant Leninism reduces politics to the conquest of the state apparatus, underestimating the battle for common sense in civil society.

The Chilean case demonstrates that both errors are lethal. The institutional left (Frente Amplio-PCCh) committed what Lenin defined as **economism**: it confused reformist administration of the state with the conquest of political power, and the drafting of constitutions with the construction of a new ruling class. In doing so, it demonstrated that conscious leadership cannot limit itself to state management, since the inherited state is itself a trench of the enemy.

The PC(AP), for its part, avoided institutional economism but faced the inverse problem: a **disproportion between the height of its political direction and the depth of its social roots**. The creation of the UPA was a correct intuition from the standpoint of front theory, but the absence of a prior territorial organisational base turned the UPA into an electoral structure without a social army. This does not invalidate the front strategy, but shows that under conditions of late neoliberalism—where media and electoral financing act as structural barriers of exclusion—the vanguard cannot improvise masses through candidacies if it has not previously built base committees in the territories.

9.3 On the PC(AP) and the Construction of an Alternative

The discussion on the PC(AP) is particularly relevant because it debunks the caricature of the anti-revisionist party as mere isolated sectarianism. The invitation to external candidacies and the construction of the UPA demonstrate a correct tactical understanding: the vanguard needs broad fronts. However, the analysis presented here suggests that the PC(AP) must resolve a structural contradiction: it maintains the Leninist form of a cadre party (militant press, democratic centralism, ideological discipline) but has not managed to transform that form into a **territorialised mass organisation**.

The political implication is clear: the party must stop competing for the media-legislative space—where the institutional left and the right concentrate all resources—and shift the centre of gravity towards the construction of **territorial resistance committees** in spaces abandoned by the state: water committees, territorial defence committees, peasant organisations, base-level trade unions. The null vote with revolutionary content is strategically correct vis-à-vis a bourgeois parliament, but it cannot be the only point of contact with the masses. If the only moment of encounter is the call to cast a null ballot, the party becomes a moral spectator of history, not its organiser.

9.4 Limitations of the Study and Projections

This essay has evident methodological limitations. First, it is a theoretical-political analysis based on secondary sources and observation of the conjuncture, not an empirical investigation with ethnographic fieldwork or survey data on electoral behaviour. Second, the Gramscian-Leninist theoretical framework, though productive, is not the only possible one: a Foucauldian focus on biopolitics, an analysis of the political economy of debt, or a reading from the sociology of social movements could enrich or nuance the findings presented here.

Third, the discussion on the PC(AP) is based on its publicly documented practice and not on ethnographic access to its internal functioning. Future research should ethnographically investigate the organisational practices of Chilean anti-revisionist parties to determine with greater precision the degree of their territorial insertion.

Finally, the most important projection of this analysis is that the fragility of the Kastian hegemony opens a historical window that will not be automatically seized by the left. The organic crisis continues. The question is not whether there will be a new uprising, but whether there will be **organisation capable of transforming spontaneity into conscious direction**. The central thesis of this article is that such organisation requires a synthesis that neither the reformist PCCh nor the PC(AP) have achieved: Gramscian patience in the trenches combined with Leninist urgency of organised leadership.

10. Conclusions

Chile 2026 is not merely an electoral defeat. It is the empirical demonstration of a **triple absence**: the absence of cultural hegemony (Gramsci), the absence of conscious organised leadership (Lenin), and the **absence of a cohesive alternative historical bloc**, historically split between those who administer the system and those who attempt to build alternatives without the prior conditions to sustain them.

The 2019 uprising opened an **organic crisis** of the post-transition historical bloc, but that crisis found no political subject capable of resolving it progressively. The institutional left—Boric, Frente Amplio, PCCh—attempted a constitutional “war of movement” without having won the “war of position” in civil society, administering the inherited neoliberalism. From Lenin, the error was **economistic**: it confused managing the state with conquering political power. There was no organisation capable of bringing a clear class consciousness to the mobilised masses “from outside”; therefore, once demobilised, those masses were reconquered by neoliberal-reactionary common sense.

From Gramsci, the error was **strategic-cultural**: the strength of enemy civil society was underestimated. It was believed that an electoral majority and a progressive government would suffice to transform the country, ignoring that the media, churches, professional guilds, and everyday language remained in the hands of a historical bloc defeated at the polls but not in culture.

Kast’s victory is, in this sense, a **reactionary restoration** that does not resolve the organic crisis but postpones it through coercion and fear. It is a hegemony of “domination” rather than “direction,” and therefore fragile. But its fragility does not automatically guarantee its defeat.

For that fragility to become opportunity, what Chile lacked in 2019–2026 is needed: **an organisation that is simultaneously Leninist vanguard and Gramscian collective of organic intellectuals**. That is, a party or movement capable of working on all fronts of political life, with discipline and theory, but also capable of conquering the cultural trenches of the everyday: the school, the trade union, the neighbourhood, the parish, the family, the territory.

The PC(AP)'s attempt with the UPA points in the correct Leninist direction: **the vanguard cannot go alone; it needs broad fronts.** But the UPA also demonstrates that **the correct tactic is not enough if there is no previously conquered cultural territory.** The right did not win simply because the left was “divided”; it won because it never stopped being hegemonic in civil society, while the left—both institutional and the UPA—fought on the terrain of the state without the backing of a new common sense.

Peasant communities, indigenous peoples, the defence of water and native forest, territorial memory against extractivism, are not folklore for a radio programme. They are **potential trenches of a war of position.** If the revolutionary left fails to speak from there, from the concrete defence of territory and everyday life, it will leave that symbolic space in the hands of the Christian right or the neoliberal market.

Chile 2026 is, ultimately, a laboratory confirming a joint thesis: **without cultural hegemony there is no possible revolution, but without a vanguard party there is no cultural hegemony to be built; and if that vanguard is split between those who administer the system and those who attempt alternative fronts without a previously prepared social army, the right will always return.** The Chilean left had masses, had government, had two constituent assemblies, had indignation, and even had alternative broad-front attempts such as the UPA; but it lacked unified organisation and time conquered in civil society. The right, fewer in mass terms but better organised and better entrenched culturally, returned. And until the left learns the lesson of both masters—Gramsci for the patience of the trenches, Lenin for the urgency of conscious leadership and the construction of fronts from a real social base—any new spontaneous uprising will again be, as Lenin says, a “tribute” paid to the absence of theory: noise, fury, historical splitting, front attempts without an army, and finally, restoration.

Postscript: The Organic Crisis Knows No Borders—Notes on Bolivia and Cuba, May 2026

As this essay concluded its drafting, two ongoing events obliged an extension of its diagnosis beyond Chilean borders. The organic crisis of the post-neoliberal-post-transition historical bloc is not the exclusive patrimony of Chile: it expresses itself, with national nuances but under a common imperial logic, throughout the region. Two scenarios illustrate this continuity: Bolivia, plunged into an insurrection threatening to overthrow an elected government; and Cuba, besieged by a tightened blockade and a direct military threat from Washington.

Bolivia: The Spectre of Coup and the Absence of Direction

In May 2026, Bolivia is experiencing its most severe social crisis in decades. What began as protests against an agricultural mortgage law has transformed into a generalised siege of the government of Rodrigo Paz: road blockades, fuel and food shortages in La Paz, clashes with dynamite, and at least four dead. Former president Evo Morales, a fugitive from justice on human trafficking charges, is leading a 190-kilometre march towards the capital while his followers maintain the encirclement of the city.

From the optic of this essay, what is revealing is not merely the Bolivian crisis itself, but **who resolves it and who does not**. The Paz government, the product of elections in which the MAS was defeated, has received explicit support from the United States—whose Under Secretary of State Christopher Landau described the protests as a “coup d’état”—and from the regional right: Milei’s Argentina sent C-130 aircraft with “humanitarian aid” that Morales denounced as transport for military personnel and repressive equipment; Chile under Kast, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru issued a joint communiqué backing Paz. Colombia, conversely, with President Gustavo Petro, offered itself as a mediator and described the events as a “popular insurrection.”

The regional institutional left, far from articulating a coherent response, is split between those who support the Bolivian government as “legitimate democracy” and those who see in the protests a “popular insurrection.” Neither position resolves the Gramscian problem: the Bolivian crisis, like the

Chilean one, is not resolved by the institutional road nor by the spontaneous insurrectional road if there is no **alternative historical bloc** prepared. The Paz government lacks cultural hegemony in the Altiplano; the protests led by Morales lack a political project beyond his personal return to power. Between the two, Bolivian civil society—miners, peasants, transport drivers—floats without direction, demanding immediate economic grievances that no political bloc succeeds in synthesising into a project of power. It is, in the Leninist sense, **pure economism** converted into organic crisis.

Cuba: Imperial Siege and the Forced War of Position

Meanwhile, Cuba faces since January 2026 a political and economic crisis without precedent since the 1990s. Following the fall of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela and the US capture of that leader, Washington blocked oil supplies to the island—including from Mexican Pemex tankers—and declared its intention to force a “political change” before year’s end. President Donald Trump has publicly stated that he “could take Cuba almost immediately” once operations in Iran are concluded, and ordered the deployment of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* aircraft carrier towards the Cuban coast.

The Cuban response has been, from a Gramscian reading, the only one possible under conditions of extreme siege: **the mobilisation of civil society in defence of the state**. More than 6.2 million Cubans—out of a population of 9 million—signed the declaration “My Signature for the Homeland” against the aggression. On 1 May 2026, over 500,000 people gathered at the Anti-Imperialist Tribune in Havana. The Armed Forces and militias are preparing for the “War of All the People,” a territorial defence plan that Gramsci would have recognised as the purest form of **war of position**: not the conquest of the enemy state, but the defence of one’s own cultural, territorial, and institutional trenches against a frontal assault.

However, the Cuban crisis also illustrates the limits of a hegemony built under permanent siege. The blockade has caused fuel shortages, rubbish accumulation in the streets of Havana, suspension of the Habano Festival, withdrawal of foreign firms such as Sherritt International, and the suspension of European shipping deliveries. On 25 February, the Cuban coast guard shot down a US vessel violating territorial waters, killing four men and detaining six others, including at least two US citizens. Tension is at its maximum.

From Lenin, Cuba demonstrates that **without conscious direction and without mass organisation, hegemony is reduced to defensive resistance**. Cuban popular mobilisation is admirable, but occurs under siege conditions that prevent the expansion of the war of position into the enemy's civil society. Cuba resists, but cannot project regional hegemony while the empire controls the media, finances, and military apparatuses. The lesson for Chile and Bolivia is clear: if the left does not conquer the cultural trenches *before* the organic crisis explodes, its resistance will be reduced to the defensive posture of the last redoubt, without capacity for hegemonic offensive.

Regional Synthesis

Bolivia and Cuba confirm the central thesis of this essay: **the organic crisis of the post-neoliberal-post-transition historical bloc is continental, not national**. In Bolivia, the regional right (with the US at its head) attempts to recompose the historical bloc through explicit support for a weak government, while the institutional left is split between uncritical support for the state and insurrectional romanticism. In Cuba, the empire abandons all pretence of cultural hegemony and bets on pure coercion—blockade, military threat, economic asphyxiation—forcing the Revolution into a resistance that, while demonstrating the strength of organised civil society, cannot by itself resolve the enemy's organic crisis.

The call to action that this essay directs to the PC(AP) and the anti-capitalist forces of the Southern Cone acquires here a regional urgency: **there is no time to lose in the construction of territorial trenches**. The right advances in a coordinated manner—Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, the imperial apparatus—while the left remains dispersed between institutional reformisms and self-referential sectarianisms. If the lesson of 2026 is not learned, the next cycle of organic crisis will find the popular forces without a social army, without cultural hegemony, and, as in Cuba, resisting under siege conditions that make victory impossible.

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