

Argentine election goes to run-off in blow to ruling Peronist faction

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28 October 2015

Twenty-five million Argentines voted on Sunday for president, vice president, both houses of the federal legislature, several governorships and provincial parliaments.

The results are a blow to the ruling Kirchnerista wing of the Peronist movement, aligned with the incumbent President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term, and her late husband and predecessor as Argentina's president, Néstor Kirchner.

The ruling faction's candidate, Daniel Scioli, running on the ballot line of the *Frente Para la Victoria* (Front for Victory, Peronist) failed to win an outright majority. The *Frente* also lost the key province of Buenos Aires.

Preliminary results indicate a virtual tie between the top two contenders. With a little over 9 million votes (36.9 percent), Scioli was followed by Mauricio Macri of the *Cambiamos* (Change) coalition with 8.4 million (34.3 percent). Sergio Massa of the UNA coalition (*Frente Renovador*, Peronist) was third, with 5.2 million votes, 21.3 percent.

In fourth place was Nicolás Del Caño of the Front of the Left and Workers (*Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores*, FIT), a coalition of Argentine pseudo-left organizations. It won some 800,000 votes (3.27 percent). It also obtained about one million votes in parliamentary elections.

In the house of deputies of the Federal legislature, The FIT won one more post. It now has four deputies.

Under Argentine law, a runoff election will take place next month between the two frontrunners.

It is an open secret in Argentina that whoever forms the next government will usher in austerity measures and attacks on wages and jobs. Government finances have reached critical levels. Public debt continues to mount in part due to accelerating demands for energy

and transportation subsidies and other welfare programs. The fiscal crisis is compounded by a collapse in the world prices of raw materials and agricultural commodities.

Shut off from Wall Street financial markets, the national economy managed to stumble along with an \$11 billion one-time line of credit from China.

Declining Central Bank reserves leave Argentina's capitalist government no alternative to an aggressive campaign of budget cuts, and attacks on jobs and living standards combined with subordination to the Wall Street vulture funds that hold billions of dollars in Argentine bonds, under the supervision of the International Monetary Fund.

Argentina is in its third year of economic stagnation, and is expected to transition into a recession in 2016. Since 2012, almost 40 percent of the Argentine labor force has joined the ranks of contingent workers. Half of the labor force earns less than 6000 pesos (US\$634) per month, just shy of the poverty line of 6400 (US\$673).

Sunday's ballot result is considered a victory for Macri by the mass media, and a setback for the FPV, in part because of the repudiation by Buenos Aires voters of the FPV candidate for governor, Aníbal Fernández. This is the first time that there will be a runoff election for president in Argentine history.

Now begins the usual bourgeois political horse-trading, including the courting of Sergio Massa and his supporters with the aim of an endorsement for the runoff. With that aim in mind, according to the Madrid daily *El País*, Macri is considering calling for a government of national unity, a coalition government of a section of the Peronists and his own right-wing bourgeois party.

The Left Front in turn performed better than

expected, particularly in Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Mendoza. In the industrial city of Córdoba the FIT candidates obtained 9 percent of the vote, 10 percent in the northwestern city of Salta, and in the province of Mendoza. In the industrial areas surrounding the city of Buenos Aires, the FIT obtained 4.3 percent of the vote and one federal deputy, Néstor Pitrola.

The FIT candidates had presented themselves as the only left alternative to the bourgeois parties, campaigning on a national reformist program and posing the picking up of some additional elected posts, rather than the independent mobilization of the Argentine working class in the struggle for socialism, as its central objective.

Undoubtedly, the number of votes for the FIT reflect the growing anger and radicalization of Argentine workers and youth, many of whom turned to the FIT in the false expectation that it represents a genuine alternative to Peronism and the lurch to the right of the Argentine establishment.

In reality, like similar electoral fronts, from Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, the Left Party in Germany and others, its politics reflect the interests of a better-off layer of the middle class and serve to subordinate the struggles of the working class to the capitalist state by advancing the illusion that the insoluble crisis of world capitalism can be answered with a program of national reforms.

Whoever wins the runoff election, scheduled for November 22, what is in store for Argentina is an explosion of class battles against austerity, cuts in living standards and the destruction of jobs.



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