

Argentine elections expose political rot and the growing threat of fascism

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As Argentina faces mass poverty, its worst economic crisis in two decades and triple-digit inflation, one of the main officials responsible, Economy Minister Sergio Massa, placed first in Sunday's presidential elections with 36.7 percent of the vote. In a runoff next month, he will face the fascist libertarian Javier Milei, a foul-mouthed admirer of Trump and Bolsonaro, who won 30 percent of the vote.

Despite some relief in the corporate media that the Peronist vote did not collapse as expected, the result was symptomatic of a political establishment that is rotting on its feet and sets the stage for an overwhelmingly unpopular government. The financial press has stressed concerns about "governability," as public bonds and the peso continue to spiral downward.

The turnout at 74 percent was the lowest since the end of the military dictatorship in 1983, while the Peronists saw their second worst performance despite winning.

Massa is the face of an austerity program aimed at paying the largest IMF debt in the world, which has spurred a barrage of mass protests and wildcat strikes across the country this year. Meanwhile, the Peronist union bureaucracy has been struggling to contain the class struggle.

In the context of a global wave of strikes in defense of living standards and jobs and an emerging mass movement against war, even the national coalition government now being proposed by Massa is not expected to yield any different results.

Facing an overall shift to the left and toward revolutionary struggle in the working class, Argentina's ruling class has increasingly relied on the pseudo-left to carry water for the Peronists. However, these forces are now quickly becoming discredited and revealing their political bankruptcy.

The so-called Left and Workers Front Unity (FIT-U) received 710,000 votes, or 2.7 percent. This was 570,000 votes less than their maximum in 2021. While Milei's party grew from three to 39 federal deputies, FIT-U went from four to five.

The failure to capitalize on the social crisis has engulfed

the parties that make up the FIT-U in political turmoil and pushed them toward an increasingly open alignment with the Peronists. Before the elections, the FIT-U joined a "united front" with a faction of the ruling Peronists led by Juan Grabois and Emilio Persico, and its leading politicians and media are now maneuvering to channel their voters behind Massa.

On Monday, for instance, the pseudo-left legislator Christian Castillo responded on national television that the FIT-U is still debating a common position, but he left little to the imagination. "We are not voting for Milei but will not give our political support to Massa," he said, dishonestly claiming that there is a difference between voting and giving political support, while suggesting that voting for Massa should be considered. He later said that voting for Massa would be compatible with maintaining "political independence" and cynically fed illusions by promising that the FIT-U will vote for any "legislation that benefits workers" introduced by the Peronists.

Significantly, Castillo said that the growth of the far right might be a "shooting star" that will simply vanish, while the pseudo-left media has described Milei as an "aberration," claiming that his rise was merely accidental.

This is a reflection of the nationalist, near-sighted and ahistorical approach of these opportunists, who do not understand what processes drive their own actions and words, where they are headed or the implications of their decisions. They react impressionistically to each event, according to how it impacts their middle class careers in politics, the trade union bureaucracy, academia or NGOs.

By hindering the development of a genuinely independent revolutionary and socialist alternative and promoting class collaborationism, the pseudo-left is politically responsible for the rise of Milei.

Millions of small business owners, unemployed and informal workers, and youth voted for Milei because they see him as the only option for "extreme" change. In media interviews, his voters often refer to the fact that the Central Bank has no reserves and has failed in containing inflation,

which has cut their take-home incomes in half, “there is no money in the streets,” the healthcare system and schools are collapsing, public transportation is lacking, among other reasons.

The growth of the far right is an international process. Facing the initial stages of a new redivision and recolonization by world imperialism, as evidenced by the US-led escalation of the war in Ukraine and Israel’s genocidal campaign against Palestinians, the ruling classes are moving headlong toward dictatorship.

As described by Leon Trotsky on the eve of World War II, “the ruling cliques of all countries look upon democracy, military dictatorship, fascism, etc., as so many different instruments for subjecting their own peoples to imperialist aims.”

Both, Massa and Milei speak for broad sections of the ruling class, who currently hold different tactics on how to better serve foreign capital and imperialism in the context of a historic crisis of global and Argentine capitalism. This means facilitating the efforts by foreign capital to loot Argentina’s grains, shale gas and lithium, along with the public treasury and cheap labor.

As the *Financial Times* writes: “What Argentina really needs, according to Alberto Ramos, chief Latin America economist at Goldman Sachs, is a rapid and dramatic fiscal adjustment, an independent central bank and wide-ranging structural reforms to make the country more open and flexible.”

While Ramos does not oppose the dollarization proposed by Milei, he stresses the imperative of further cutting labor and other production costs to attract investments.

Massa offers a relatively more gradual approach than Milei to accomplish the same goals, while relying on the trade unions to suppress the class struggle and leveraging commercial and financial ties with China. During one of the debates, he summarized his plans: “Argentina needs to enter a process of development: gas pipelines, selling energy to the world, exporting added value. That is the way forward to accumulating foreign reserves and strengthening our currency.”

The attempts by Massa to strike a more progressive pose that defends “national sovereignty” are absurd. Far from its national reformist beginnings after World War II, when Argentina had one of the highest incomes per capita, Peronism today has been reduced to a tool to enforce the diktats of Wall Street and its partners in the local financial aristocracy.

Milei, for his part, plans to eliminate the Central Bank and most ministries, and to privatize all healthcare and education, at best giving vouchers to the poorest layers, among other reactionary measures. Teach blind parrots how

to say “supply and demand,” and you get Milei’s cabinet. His team is composed of influencer economists whose premises were refuted 150 years ago by Marx.

But describing Milei and the far right as an accidental “aberration” is politically criminal, since it minimizes the real threat his rise represents.

Workers should make no mistake. Milei, who wields a chainsaw during rallies, is proposing to cut down much more than social spending and democratic rights, like abortion. When asked about imminent mass opposition against his policies, Milei unequivocally responds: “They’ll go to jail.”

Moreover, he plans to leave all defense and security considerations in the hands of his running mate, Victoria Villarruel, a daughter and granddaughter of military officials during the US-backed military dictatorship. She is the president of the Center for Legal Studies on Terrorism and Its Victims (CELTYV), a fascist organization dedicated to minimizing and justifying the crimes of the dictatorship, which led to the killing or disappearance of 30,000 leftists.

Milei represents a program of open civil war and fascist reaction against the working class. Massa and the Peronists, however, do not represent a more “democratic” alternative. During the 1970s, the Peronist state and union bureaucracy formed fascist death squads called the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance to kill radicalized workers, students and intellectuals, even before the US-backed military coup in March 1976. The incumbent government of Alberto Fernandez and the local Peronist authorities have consistently deployed security forces to crack down on demonstrators, while Massa has promised a policy of “zero tolerance,” which effectively means a police state.

Without the building of a genuinely revolutionary leadership in the working class, another Peronist term would only create the conditions for the further growth of the fascist threat.



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