

Peronist Massa lurches further to right ahead of Argentina's presidential runoff with the fascist Milei

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17 November 2023

Fascistic TV personality Javier Milei and the Peronist Economy Minister Sergio Massa are neck-in-neck in the polls ahead of Argentina's presidential runoff Sunday.

The elections have made clear that Argentine capitalism offers nothing to workers. Both candidates would lead far-right administrations committed to further cuts to real wages, social spending, and corporate taxes, subordination to US imperialism and increasingly open forms of dictatorial rule. There are merely tactical differences, and, under conditions of extreme crisis and inequality, there is no constituency for democracy in the ruling class.

While Milei proposes to dissolve the Central Bank, dollarize the economy and eliminate Public Health, Education, Labor and other ministries, Massa advocates a "national unity" administration to enforce "fiscal order" to pay back the IMF and other creditors.

In the context of a rapidly escalating war drive by imperialism against Russia, China and Iran and a financial house of cards in the US, the financial and corporate elites essentially see Argentina as a piñata for natural gas, lithium, soy and other crops, and remaining pension funds, along with state and union-owned assets.

In the last stretch, Massa has stressed that Argentines are voting "for or against Milei." At the same time, however, he has lurched further to the right and revealed how fascist traditions with deep historical roots in Peronism are coming increasingly to the fore. Massa has made repeated reassurances to the most reactionary sectors of the ruling class and imperialism that he will help them plunder the country and crush opposition as aggressively as Milei, while offering a fig leaf to the far right.

"Argentina's way out is through a national unity agreement that allows us to cut the tax system, including agro-export taxes," said Massa in the last debate last Sunday, appealing particularly to the fascist agribusiness lobby.

That night, Massa responded, "I am glad we finally agree on something" after Milei laid out his fascist program for a police state. Milei had just said: "The state is in charge of security, but like everything the State does, it does it poorly. Argentina is a bloodbath. We do not believe in the logic that the criminal is also a victim."

When the Zionist genocide in Gaza sets a new bar on how far the ruling elites are embracing the crimes associated with fascism, Milei has waved the Israeli flag at rallies. Meanwhile, Massa boasted that he called for declaring Hamas a terrorist organization even before the recent war. He condemned the incumbent Alberto Fernandez administration for not going far enough to back the genocidal campaign.

The capitalist elite largely favors Massa, who received over 90 million pesos in donations in the first round—from sectors ranging from banking to retail to import-export and corporate media—compared to 14 million pesos from two employers for Milei.

A director of an Argentine business association explained to the *Financial Times*: "Massa doesn't want change at the roots, but if you WhatsApp him he will take it upon himself to solve your problem. Milei won't respond to your message, except maybe to insult you."

However, the clear favorite for the elite was the more "moderate" right-winger Patricia Bullrich of the coalition led by former president Mauricio Macri, giving them 589 million pesos. But, after placing third in the first round, Bullrich endorsed Milei—undoubtedly with the approval of the main sponsors.

It is worth adding that Milei was a paid advisor for Massa's party Frente Renovador, while several insiders have indicated that Massa himself has helped sponsor Milei.

Regarding the military, *El Pais* interviewed several active officials and found some hesitation to support the dictatorial politics of Milei and his running mate Victoria Villarruel, who runs a fascist organization dedicated to denying or minimizing the mass killings and torture committed under the 1976-1983 US-backed military dictatorship.

Nonetheless, the Spanish daily concludes: "The vice-presidential candidate has promised them [the military] a significant increase in the budget if she reaches the presidential palace. It remains to be seen whether this will be enough to gain support in the barracks."

Then there is the vote by eight million Argentines for Milei in the first round. Some sectors of youth and workers undoubtedly cast a confused, protest vote. However, for the first time since the mid-1970s, broad sectors of the middle class devastated by inflation and economic crisis are being successfully mobilized by a declaration of civil war against the working class, posing the enormous danger of an emerging fascist movement.

The bourgeoisie has responded throughout history and is everywhere responding to growing mass opposition today by promoting fascism. Workers must urgently draw the historical lessons on the imperative of opposing any efforts to subordinate their revolutionary struggles to supposedly "democratic" sections of the ruling class and any form of popular front.

In Argentina, however, the pseudo-left parties in the Left Workers Front (FIT-U) are doing the exact opposite and repeating the criminal role played by their predecessors to politically chain workers to an increasingly fascist Peronist apparatus.

The group Socialist Left (IS) has said it is voting for Massa. Its union leader Rubén “Pollo” Sobrero has declared: “I understand that if I go to a march against the government and if Massa is there, they will surely beat me up, they will gas me, they will throw me in jail... Milei will make me disappear.”

The Socialist Workers Movement (MST) absurdly endorsed Massa by calling for “Not voting for Milei” and opposing any appeal to cast blank ballots. The Socialist Workers Party (PTS) has repeatedly insisted that it “understands” those voting for Massa while using soporifics to disarm workers about the immense danger of fascism and dictatorship. The PTS had called for voting for the bourgeois candidate Fernando Haddad of the Workers Party in Brazil in 2018 against the fascist Jair Bolsonaro.

The Partido Obrero is calling for a blank vote, but it recently formed a “united front” with MST and the Peronist faction led by Juan Grabois and Emilio Persico.

“The left cannot give any political or electoral support to a leader of the Yankee embassy,” writes the PTS, while PO claims that “the positions of IS and MST are 100% opportunist.” Nonetheless, the repeated instances where the MST and IS have nakedly backed US imperialism—its wars in Libya, Syria, and Ukraine and even the coup attempt in Venezuela— have not stopped these forces from working together in FIT-U and the trade unions to channel opposition behind the Peronist Yankee puppets at home.

The Peronists again set the stage for fascism with the support of Morenoism

In tandem with the election, the first trial began this week in Rosario over the historic March 1975 crackdown against steelworkers in Villa Constitución.

A few months after Acindar workers had elected a new union leadership opposed to the Peronist General Confederation of Workers (CGT), about 4,000 armed troops and police were deployed by the Peronist government with signature Ford Falcons, helicopters and dogs to kidnap, torture, detain or kill some 300 militant workers at the factory and in their homes. The repression continued against a plant occupation and a 59-day strike across the town. Witnesses point to the participation of Peronist paramilitary forces and members of the fascist Peronist Union Youth, one of the contingents of the Triple A death squads.

Two years earlier, the ruling class had decided to have bourgeois nationalist Juan Domingo Perón return to Argentina from exile in Spain, where the Peronists had cultivated the closest relationship with fascist dictator Francisco Franco after World War II.

Perón was quickly installed in power to use popular illusions in his bygone reformism to suppress a massive revolutionary uprising of workers that was taking place as part of a global upsurge that began with the May-June 1968 general strike in France. Perón and, after his death in July 1974, his wife Isabel, implemented a “Social Pact” elaborated by the Stalinist economist José Ber Gelbard and agreed to by the CGT. It included a wage freeze that resulted in a major loss of buying power, estimated at around 20 percent, due to rampant inflation.

By comparison, between December 2015 and September 2022, real wages fell 21.4 percent, according to official figures. Meanwhile,

inflation is expected to reach 185 percent this year, and wage agreements reached by the unions are rapidly falling behind.

As early as February 1975, Isabel Perón signed a secret decree ordering the military to “neutralize and/or annihilate the subversive elements,” beginning with the guerrillas in Tucumán.

The repression that followed, including in Villa Constitución, was seen as a pre-requisite for the June 1975 “Rodrigo,” a radical economic shock named after the economy minister Celestino Rodrigo. The peso was devalued, and oil, utility and food prices ramped up.

Facing a rank-and-file rebellion, the CGT was compelled to call for a general strike to contain the movement and channel it behind negotiations for a 100 percent wage rise (later matching inflation at 180 percent). Rodrigo and the welfare minister José López Rega, the leader of the Triple A, were forced to resign, and the Peronists agreed to their first deal ever with the IMF.

During the 1969-1975 upsurge in Argentina, the Socialist Workers Party (PST), founded and led by the Nahuel Moreno and belonging to the Pabloite United Secretariat, played a key role in channeling the opposition behind the Peronists and politically disarming workers ahead of the 1976 fascist-military coup.

Today’s calls and apologies for voting for Massa citing the threat of fascism echo the decision by the PST to join the “Bloc of 8” in 1974. The bloc was a show of political unity of numerous capitalist parties behind the Peron administration, explicitly to defend bourgeois democracy against threats of a military coup. Moreno had also played a key role in promoting the formation of suicidal Castroite guerrilla groups.

As the Peronists plan their own “Massazo” against social rights and a fascist turn to open repression, the pseudo-left has shown that it speaks for layers of the upper middle class concerned solely with protecting their privileged positions in the trade unions, academia, politics and NGOs, where they ultimately serve to block the political independence and the internationalist and revolutionary aspirations of the working class. All claims about the need to defend bourgeois democracy and a false “unity” under the political control of the Peronists reflect their own nationally based interests.

The same warning presciently made by Trotsky as events were unfolding during the Spanish Revolution applies with equal force today in Argentina and internationally: “By lulling the workers and peasants with parliamentary illusions, by paralyzing their will to struggle, the Popular Front creates the favorable conditions for the victory of fascism. The policy of coalition with the bourgeoisie must be paid for by the proletariat with years of new torments and sacrifice, if not by decades of fascist terror.”



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