

Fascistic candidate Javier Milei elected president of Argentina

Andrea Lobo
20 November 2023

Fascistic candidate Javier Milei won Sunday's presidential election in Argentina, defeating Peronist Sergio Massa in a runoff by the wide margin of 55.69 percent against 44.30 percent, or 3 million votes.

Milei is a TV personality promoted by the corporate media whose choleric outbursts against the "left" and the working class have been directed for years at cultivating a social base for massive austerity and fascist reaction.

The vote was a massive repudiation of the Peronist government of President Alberto Fernandez and the Peronist candidate, Economy Minister Massa, who was the face of social austerity policies and devaluations of the peso at the behest of the IMF and the corporate-financial oligarchy.

Milei was able to exploit the hatred for the Peronists, who have ruled Argentina for most of the 40 years since the fall of the dictatorship and are falsely presented as the "left" by the media. Presenting himself as the only authentic opposition, Milei's rhetoric fraudulently amalgamated as "parasites" and thieves the government and union bureaucracies, together with the working class and the 40 percent of Argentines who rely on social assistance.

The pessimistic mood of many of those going to the polls was summed up by one Milei voter who told the media: "*Mejor un loco que un ladrón*," better a madman than a thief.

Milei won because 6.5 million more voters, particularly from working class areas in the largest cities, added their votes to Milei in the second round, while 8.3 million voters—many whom traditionally would have backed Peronism—preferred to abstain and pay a fine in a country where voting is mandatory.

Massa won in 24, or just over half, of the working class suburbs around Greater Buenos Aires, where the Peronist apparatus is the strongest and which represent nearly a third of voters nationally, but Milei won in 16 of them, compared to none in the primaries. Even greater shifts took place in the other largest cities—Córdoba (75 percent voted for Milei), Rosario (57.9 percent), Mar del Plata (56.7 percent), Tucumán (60.3 percent) and Mendoza (73 percent).

Massa came in first solely in Buenos Aires Province and in the impoverished northern provinces of Formosa and Santiago del Estero, with the rest of the country turning against Peronism.

The pseudo-left seeks to put workers to sleep

The bulk of workers who voted for Milei did so in protest against the policies of the Peronists and not in support of his fascist politics. However, it would be a criminal mistake to minimize the threat posed to the working class by what amounts to an emerging fascist movement among impoverished layers of Argentina's middle class, which has historically been the largest in Latin America.

This is what the pseudo-left representatives of the complacent upper-

middle class are doing. They are repeating the crimes of their predecessors, Nahuel Moreno and other renegades from Trotskyism, who politically disarmed the working class ahead of the fascist-military dictatorship, primarily by sowing illusions in the Peronist government and union bureaucracy.

These forces revolve around the so-called Left and Workers Front (FIT-U), an unprincipled electoral bloc which has long been promoted as a model by the pseudo-left across Latin America and Europe. For years, these groups have systematically subordinated working class struggles to capitalist politics through appeals to the trade union bureaucracy and the Peronist politicians, and are clearly not seen as an alternative by the millions of workers breaking with Peronism. The FIT-U won 722,061 votes in the first round, about 500,000 less than in 2021.

All of the FIT-U parties either endorsed Massa, said they did not oppose voting for Massa, or had previously joined a "united front" with a faction of the ruling Peronist coalition.

Now, they write that Milei is "weak" and will have to respect "bourgeois democracy," while they have stopped referring to him as "fascistic" or an outright "fascist."

"The Milei administration will be marked by contradictions and many weaknesses," tweets Nicolas del Caño of the Morenoite Socialist Workers Party (PTS), whose publication *La Izquierda Diario* is already feeding illusions, suggesting that the Peronist union bureaucracy will fight Massa: "What are you going to do now? Are you going to declare a state of alert and convoke assemblies? Yes or no, sirs." The PTS then vows to "demand that the union leaderships end their passivity and not begin making deals with Milei."

For his part, Jorge Altamira, now leading an external faction thrown out of the Workers Party (PO) he founded in 1964, declared shortly before the second round: "Now they say that democracy is threatened and we say no way, because democracy is serving the capitalist interests. The debate lies elsewhere." The ruling elites, he adds, "intend to fix this mess on the one hand, with an economic blow after the elections and using the authority of an elected president and an elected Congress. There is nothing else under discussion."

Such talk is myopic and nationalist, ignoring the rise of fascistic forces globally. It reflects the social position of layers of aspiring pro-capitalist politicians and union bureaucrats, who easily convince themselves that they can indefinitely continue to betray workers, unconcerned that their actions inevitably set the stage for fascism.

The ruling class relies upon Milei to implement a program of fascist reaction

An explosive clash will come sooner rather than later, once Milei is inaugurated on December 10—the 40th anniversary of the end of the

military dictatorship. His policies represent an existential threat to the working class, especially those sections that rely on the meager social assistance that Milei is planning to phase out entirely.

Milei wielded a chainsaw at rallies and vowed to arrest protesters and “return the authority” to the security forces, while repeating statements justifying and minimizing the killings and torture carried out by the fascist military dictatorship that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. His campaign promised to raise the military budget from 0.6 percent of GDP to 2 percent and to deploy the military domestically.

In his acceptance speech, Milei said he would act swiftly and threatened war against the working class: “We know there are those who will resist: all according to the law, nothing outside.”

For her part, his running mate Victoria Villarruel has made a career out of minimizing and justifying the killing of tens of thousands of leftists during the dictatorship, whose victims she calls “terrorists.” Responding to protesters at her voting place on Sunday, she said: “This is the first time that the daughter of a military officer will become vice president. They were the ones who had children of terrorists and terrorists in government positions.”

Milei has also made clear that he acts as a puppet of US imperialism, waving the Israeli flag in support of the Zionist genocide in Gaza and in support for the war drive of the US-NATO axis against Russia, China and Iran. Opposing any push for a “multipolar world” that challenges US hegemony, he has gone so far as to suggest cutting ties with Argentina’s main commercial partners—Brazil and China—and leaving the BRICS, which Argentina just entered this year. He also said he would leave the South American economic bloc Mercosur, which was in the process of finalizing a trade deal with the European Union.

The *Financial Times* of London has made numerous warnings, with headlines like “Argentina lurches from one folly to another,” “Argentina’s Milei faces enormous hurdles to govern” and “Dollarising disrupter brings instability.” But it makes clear what the City of London wants from Milei, with the latter article backing dollarization while insisting that investors will only stay “*if radicalism is swiftly followed by stability.*”

In a piece titled “Don’t Cry for Milei’s Argentina,” Bloomberg senior editor John Authers applauds Milei’s statement on Sunday that “there’s no room for gradual measures,” but expresses skepticism about the outcome of Milei’s “big experiment in libertarian economics.”

“The devaluation that lies ahead and the kind of austerity that will accompany it, is a lot to ask of anyone,” the columnist writes.

In sum, for the financial aristocracy, a dollarized economy that hands monetary control to the US Federal Reserve requires radical measures to maintain the massive profits from high interest rates and a cheap peso that have predominated in recent years. Investors would like the peso to be even cheaper, but a dollarized economy equally calls for massive cuts to real wages and social spending or the prospect of capital flight.

The ruling class knows that even milder social cuts than what they are now demanding were the main reason why Argentine workers opposed the Peronists, and the “ask” by Wall Street is for a political regime concordant with the massive opposition its economic policies will elicit.

Leon Trotsky pointedly wrote in “Fascism: What it is and how to fight it” that capitalism takes the risk of mobilizing the “crazed petty bourgeoisie and the bands of declassed and demoralized lumpenproletariat” as shock troops against the working class for this

purpose: “From fascism the bourgeoisie demands a thorough job; once it has resorted to methods of civil war, it insists on having peace for a period of years.” That is, the “stability” and “governability” demanded by Wall Street and dominant sections of the ruling class who are now backing Milei, leads along a path to civil war.

At first, his administration will need to build up the repressive apparatus and rely on the Peronist union bureaucracy and pseudo-left to contain the class struggle and further wear down and politically disarm workers.

Latin America already famously saw a libertarian-fascist experiment under Augusto Pinochet’s blood-soaked dictatorship in Chile (1973-1990), whose policies were directed by economist Milton Friedman and his disciples, the “Chicago Boys,” along with Friedrich Hayek. These are among the sources Milei most frequently cites as his inspiration. In particular, Milei refers to Friedman’s statements—which appear in letters to Pinochet—that inflation must be answered with a “shock treatment” that dramatically cuts government spending and induces mass unemployment, while removing any controls over prices and wages.

In a similar way, the Argentine fascist dictator Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla (1976-1981) removed price controls, cut export taxes and imposed a massive currency depreciation, while freezing salaries, banning strikes and promoting a massive deindustrialization and financialization of the economy. The result was mass unemployment and the slashing of labor’s share of national income from 43 percent to 25 percent in two years.

Today, imperialism faces a mounting wave of strikes and protests from below that will far surpass the upsurge of 1968-1975 that these dictatorships helped to quell. The major powers are also preparing for a third world war by scrambling to gain control over key strategic areas and resources in a new redivision and recolonization of the globe. In Argentina, imperialism needs to secure control over lithium, natural gas, soy, corn and other crops, and to intensify the exploitation of workers, while looting pensions and other assets.

The decisive task in confronting this onslaught is the building of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) as a new internationalist and revolutionary leadership in the working class in Argentina, Latin America as a whole, and internationally, to put an end to the source of fascism, genocide and war—the capitalist profit system.



To contact the WWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wws.org/contact