

Argentina: A portrait of the primary elections

Last Sunday, September 12th, the PASO (Simultaneous and Mandatory Open Primaries), internal elections in the parties in Argentina, took place; the primary election indicates the fundamental tendencies for the parliamentary election in November, when half the seats in the House of Representatives and one third of the Argentine Senate are renewed. The results were a disaster for the Peronist government. This very week, as a result of the electoral defeat, a crisis has opened up in the heart of the government, with part of the ministers resigning.

It is very important to follow the politics in the neighboring country. From time to time, Bolsonaro speaks out against Alberto's government model; a part of the center-left takes the Peronist government as a reference of an egalitarian and democratic model. Even Guilherme Boulos supports movements from the so-called left wing of the government and recently made a live broadcast with Axel Kicillof, the left-wing Peronist governor of Buenos Aires province. Keeping the particularities in mind, Argentina activates two elements: both Bolsonaro cites Argentina as a bad example, and part of the opposition and sectors even of the left echo with Peronism, especially its "left wing", Peronism K.

In other words, understanding what is going on in the "hermano" country is fundamental, especially in a scenario of a Latin America that is driven and full of contradictions. Let's take a closer look at the results.

Peronism had its worst historical result in elections of this kind. The "Frente de todos" alliance composed of Alberto Fernandez/Cristina Kichner lost in 18 provinces, among them the five largest; the most bitter defeat was in Buenos Aires

Province, where it governs, and in Santa Cruz, the cradle of Kirchnerism.

As journalist Sylvia Colombo wrote for Folha de São Paulo: “In the end, the main opposition force, the center-right coalition Juntos por la Transformación, obtained 40.02% of the votes at the national level, while Peronism obtained 31.03%”. In the Province of Buenos Aires, Juntos por la Transformación, summing up its two candidates overtook Peronism. The Macrista coalition won by a wide margin in the City of Buenos Aires, with María Eugenia Vidal reaching close to 50%, against only 24.66% for the ruling Santoro. This pattern of results was repeated throughout the country.

The first major conclusion is the defeat of the government. Alberto Fernandez was the big loser on Sunday night. The Peronist failure opened a crisis within the government. The week was marked by resignation letters from the entire Kirchnerist wing of the government. Cristina K. went public to question the political orientation of the president. Several sectors of the so-called “left K” do not hide their uneasiness, motivated by the defeat of Alberto’s model. Misery, unemployment and hunger grew during the pandemic. The policy of favoring mega enterprises linked to capital, through mining, resulted in important struggles as in the Chubut region. And we are on the eve of a new negotiation with the International Monetary Fund. A new servile agreement would bring down any “national and popular” discourse.

In the opposite direction of the Peronist crisis, the polls showed a living Macrism. Expressing the line of the most conservative bourgeoisie, supported by the conservative middle classes, Macri’s alliance, Juntos por la transformación, has regained important positions, and is preparing to be the big winner in the November elections.

There is a new element, however, in the resumption of the right-wing opposition. The emergence of a trend to the right

of Macrism, with certain traits that dialogue with the far right, represented by the so-called "libertarians". Its leader, the controversial economist Javier Milei, has done virtual activities with Eduardo Bolsonaro and radicalized his discourse to the right. A party with an ultraliberal primer, flirting with positions even further to the right, made its entrance in the federal capital, doing 13%. As in other countries, Vox in Spain and Mexico, Chega in Portugal, the electoral shift of a wide portion to positions further to the right is one of the novelties of PASO in Argentina.

However, there is another pole that is strengthening, independent of the government and the right-wing opposition. The Left Front (Unidad) held a surprising election. Winning more than a million votes, the Left Front has consolidated itself as the third national force. As a result of a national extension, the FIT(U) could have four more deputies at the national level, with highlights for the votes in the Province -with Nicolas del Cano and Alejandro Bodart-, in Chubut, Salta and other provinces. The big highlight was getting close to 24% in Jujuy, with the leader of the cleaning workers, the indigenous Alejandro Vilca. Taken as a whole, the left made 1 million and 300 thousand votes. An important expression. There is a real space for the "left of the left".

This strengthening of the left indicates a dynamic. The struggle that the PTS and the MST gave to seek the unity of the whole left – beyond the FIT(U) with the New Mas and Luiz Zamora – was verified to be fair. If the votes in the Federal Capital were added up, it would come close to 9% in absolute terms. However, a plate with this pull could generate a synergy capable of going beyond the sum of the votes of FIT and Zamora and contest with Milei, fighting the growth of the reactionary line.

There are a number of debates within the Left Front. The MST is fighting for the project to expand to contest factions that are moving away from Peronism and the illusions that Alberto's

victory awakened. For the advance of the left of the left it is fundamental not to "fall in love" with the positive vote obtained in the PASOs, but to fight for the broadening of this project. The good results of the MST's "Revolutionize the Left" list show the space for this broadening. On the other hand, the weight of the extreme right cannot be minimized, but must be fought, as we are doing in Brazil and in other parts of the world.

The Argentine challenge is great. The organic crisis in Latin America must continue for a whole period, with sudden turns to the left and to the right. To build a left that is independent but able to dialogue with different trajectories, to dispute sectors of the masses and to prepare for the battles ahead is the most urgent task of our times.