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Argentina

Left faces elections

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In the context of an ongoing process of crisis and mobilization that has continued in Argentina since the revolutionary days of December 2001, the anti-capitalist left is faced with considerable challenges. It must also surmount its own limitations.

The violent police repression of a 'corte de ruta' (road block) on June 26 outside Buenos Aires, with the firing of live ammunition and the killing in cold blood of two young unemployed piqueteros, led to massive popular indignation and a sharp deepening of the political crisis. Interim president Duhalde threw in the sponge and announced presidential and legislative elections for March 30, 2003.

Faced with a comatose Radical Party and a divided and weakened Peronist party, the polls now show progress for the two main opposition figures: Elisa Carrio, the leader of the 'centre left' who advocates a humanized capitalism shorn of its neo-liberal excesses, with the support of sectors of the Church and one of the three main union federations, the CTA; and Luis Zamora, the only national deputy the demonstrators really consider as one of theirs, and who defends an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist orientation.

Numerically weak, the movement launched last year by Zamora is however only a very minority component of what is called in Argentina 'the left'. This left is mainly Trotskyist, the remainder consisting of a small Castroist CP which says it favours socialist revolution, a Maoist organization (the PCR) which is fairly strong in the piquetero movement and the Humanist Party, which has a ecologist, feminist and anti-neo-liberal profile.

The Trotskyist far left is the main organized political force and works inside the popular assemblies, the piquetero movement, class struggle trade union formations and unions outside the control of the bureaucracies.

It is however very divided, with four organizations with a nationwide presence: the Partido Obrero (PO), Movimiento socialista de trabajadores (MST), Partido de trabajadores por el socialismo (PTS), Movimiento al socialismo (MAS)) and a large number of smaller groups. This division is accompanied by exacerbated rivalries, self-proclamatory conceptions and manipulatory attitudes to the mass movement (practices which are also employed by other left formations, it should be said). Thus Trotskyists in general are perceived in a contradictory way: positively and with respect for their role in the struggles and self-organization, negatively and with mistrust for their tendency to substitute themselves for the autonomous movement using 'apparatus methods', a term commonly used and debated in the popular assemblies. Add to this the tendency of a certain kind of Trotskyism to overestimate its own reality as 'vanguard party', the relationship of forces and the immediate revolutionary potentialities. This was notably reflected at the last meeting of the National Piquetero Bloc (June 22- 23, 2002), the left wing of the unemployed movement, with the adoption of a resolution claiming that 'the question of power is on the agenda' (against a minority position that the immediate task was to win the majority of workers to a perspective of power), rejecting unity of action with the reformists and defending in general an ultra-left orientation.

These traits render improbable the appearance of a political alternative by the simple growth or even addition of the existing organizations. While his mass recognition allows him to play a key role, Luis Zamora has until now declined any responsibility for taking the initiative for the formation of a new political force. There is nonetheless an urgent necessity for a broad anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist political movement, unitary and democratic, capable of offering a positive response to the cry of rejection 'Que se vayan todos!' ['out with all of them']. It is to be hoped that revolutionary Marxist militants and currents can help them advance in this road, placing their experience at the service of the autonomous organization of workers and unemployed, and above all its political centralization.