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Argentina

University funding law: Milei's first failure?

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This law aims to recover the budget lost since the Milei government took office, due to high inflation and the ultra-austerity policy. In particular, it aims to raise the salaries of teaching and non-teaching staff (which have fallen by an average of 30%) and student grants.

A veto that won't go through

A few weeks ago, parliament approved a law to revalue pensions, but the government vetoed it under the Constitution. However, the legislative power has the possibility of imposing its law if two-thirds of the legislators present in both chambers agree. On this occasion, Milei gathered enough deputies to prevent the law from being passed. The mobilisation on this issue at the beginning of September was significant but not massive, with 50,000 demonstrators in Buenos Aires and heavy repression.

On the other hand, Milei's veto of the university law is facing stronger opposition in parliament. It is likely that more than two-thirds of the Senate will oppose it, and it is possible, although not certain, that the Chamber of Deputies will do the same.

Milei less popular

At the same time, Milei's popularity is starting to fall. For the first time since he came to power, several opinion polls, including in the right-wing media, show a fall in favourable opinions of his government and of himself. Whereas it was still over 52% in July, it is now below 50% and close to 40% in some cases. This is still high if we take into account all the austerity measures he has imposed over the last year or so, which have brutally worsened the living conditions of the majority of the working and middle classes. This loss of credibility should be seen in the context of the fact that political and trade union sectors, hitherto very accommodating to Milei, are allowing themselves to play a freer game and to make gestures of opposition or resistance.

Massive demonstrations

The deep popular attachment to the public university (which is free in Argentina, with no conditions of access and of a high international standard), Milei's growing discredit and the fact that it was the university authorities and all the unions who launched the call explain the success of the demonstrations on 2 October. They took place all over Argentina, including in small towns, and were, in terms of numbers, of the same order of magnitude as those of last April, i.e. massive: from hundreds of thousands to a million people. Unlike the demonstrations of recent months, they did not give rise to confrontation or repression. Politicians such as Massa, the former Peronist candidate in the last presidential elections, and members of parliament from the UCR, the traditional 'radical' party of the bourgeoisie, were even seen in the ranks of the demonstrators. Using this presence, Milei and the media in its service have of course described the demonstrations as 'political propaganda'. But nothing says that this is enough to stop the movement.

Before and during the vote in Parliament in the coming week, university strikes and demonstrations are planned

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across the country. It will be important to see whether the student movement, which has been largely absent for years, mobilises en masse on this occasion. In any case, hopes are growing of inflicting on Milei what would be a first political defeat after more than ten months of authoritarian and ultra-neoliberal government.

PS:

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