

ARGENTINA

Shock policy and mano dura in Argentina

Monday 25 December 2023, by [Z. Lola](#) (Date first published: 20 December 2023).

Drastic measures to avoid hyperinflation, repressive decrees and serious threats to democratic freedoms: the week of inauguration of the libertarian-ultraliberal Milei, elected on 20 November, shows the abyss that is opening up with this government of extreme right-right alliance.

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The Macri-Milei alliance means that key posts have been given to the traditional right, which has been rewarded for its support for the outsider: the Economy to Macri’s former minister, Luis Caputo, and Homeland Security to the defeated presidential candidate, Patricia Bullrich. Both demonstrated the full potential of this alliance by embodying the government’s first attacks this week: a blank cheque for austerity and repression.

Flamethrower plan

Caputo’s announcements? An economic “shock” that is even more violent than expected: strong devaluation, no price controls, but salaries, pensions and state budgets maintained. The aim was no longer to make the “political caste” pay the price of austerity, but to reduce spending... through inflation. The “flamethrower plan” replaces the “chainsaw plan”: a scorched earth policy that will allow those who survive to enjoy the calm after the storm... If the plan works!

According to the projections of the minister - who hopes to resolve the crisis within 18 to 24 months - worsening the crisis and stagflation are inevitable for a better tomorrow. The “truth of the figures” (inflation estimated at 3,700%, at a rate of +1% per day) is being met with “intensive therapy”.

“Order and Progress”: freedom according to Milei and Bullrich

The second salvo came when the abject Bullrich announced his law and order programme in a press release soberly entitled “Without freedom, there can be no order or progress”.

The Bullrich Protocol details the government’s response to the protests. In view of the announcement by the left-wing forces and the unions of a first demonstration on 20 December, the anniversary of the days of 19 and 20 December 2001, which were in response to the same shock and anti-democratic measures, the decree clarified the Milei-Bullrich line on democratic dialogue: extra-judicial intervention by federal forces in all cases of indiscriminate blocking of roads, with

identification and registration of organizations and individuals as “perpetrators, accomplices and instigators”, transmission of antecedents to the authorities and to the courts in the event of environmental damage (tyre fires), and charging of the cost of operations, including repressive measures, to the organizations and perpetrators. This is no more and no less than applying anti-terrorist legislation to “internal enemies” and other social “hostage-takers”, and doing so by decree.

Another indicator is the attack on left-wing MPs by an Avanza Libertad MP. The episode would have been anecdotal if, in response to a tweet from FIT-U leader Myriam Bregman denouncing the unconstitutionality of repressive measures and defending the right to demonstrate that “nothing can stop”, the MP had refrained from responding with an open threat and a thinly veiled call for violence: “[Yes]: prison or a bullet”.

Facing up to the extreme right

Milei confirms many of the fears raised by his detractors. How bitter must be those who, preferring to position themselves against the “false Massa-Milei dilemma” in the first round, opted *mezza voce* for passive resistance and abstention on 20 November.

The time has come for unity and building of resistance fronts. Over and above the immediate dangers for our social camp, an even more catastrophic defeat would be on the cards if we remain stunned.

How can we face up to the multiple offensives and enter into resistance while confronting a never-ending crisis, all the more so under the threat of criminalization and repression whose precedents are still vivid in our collective memory? The mobilizations of the next few days cannot be understood without taking this into account.

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P.S.

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