

Argentina's Javier Milei Charts the Way Back From Left-wing Nonsense – and Not Just for Argentina



by Conrad Black

Canada is far from the only important country that seems to have lost its capacity for competent self-government. The great United States of America, which has been a relatively benign but traumatizingly imposing contiguity for Canada since the American Revolution 240 years ago, is now an unrecognizable shambles of misgovernment ostensibly presided over by a senescent, corrupt, spavined political wheel horse, who even in his prime had a tenuous relationship with the truth and was rarely on the right side of any strategic

decision.

Great American cities are becoming crime-ridden infestations of drug addicts, millions of destitute illegal migrants, and violent criminals. The United States has five per cent of the world's population, 25 per cent of its incarcerated people, and a totalitarian federal conviction rate of 98 per cent, 95 per cent of that without a trial.

The American justice system (with which I have had some amply-publicized experience) has now completely putrefied and is in part an arm of the dirty tricks division of the Democratic National Committee employed to persecute the leader of the opposition. The United States is not now, by our standards, a society of laws, and Canada should not have an extradition treaty with it.

The United Kingdom, for the first time in its history, has had four prime ministers in less than four years and has substantially repealed most of the progress achieved by Margaret Thatcher, John Major, and Tony Blair. The Conservatives are now back to being a tax-raising red Tory detritus of invertebrate flimflammers, and the British Labour Party has almost reverted to the mindless, envious, spiteful Luddite nihilism and class war of "Old Labour."

There seems to be nothing for it but to let the left ruin the country all over again and hope that the Conservatives are so shaken by the national decline they have co-authored that they return to their senses and rediscover their backbones.

Apart from the refreshing premier of Italy, Georgia Meloni, the closest I can see to a spark of hope for a renaissance of national political intelligence in an important country is Argentina. In the summer of 1968, I had the august title of Latin American editor of the Montreal Gazette, for a trip I paid for myself around South America, from which I filed a number of stories.

I was so impressed by Buenos Aires, rightly called "the Paris of South America," (and its astoundingly beautiful women) that I wrote that the then president, General Juan Carlos Onganía, despite his authoritarianism, could be the de Gaulle of Argentina.

I was too optimistic; two years later he was evicted by his fellow generals and had to take a taxi away from the Casa Rosada. Argentina is a magnificent country and at the end of World War II had a standard of living approximately equal to that of Canada. Its GDP per capita is now just a quarter of Canada's, so our governments could have been worse.

Much of this is traceable to the inexplicable popularity of the former dictator General Juan Domingo Peron, an extravagant demagogue, and his glamorous second wife, Evita. They were an elegant couple, and he struck a strong chord of populist approval, especially with the couple's rabble-rousing harangues from the balcony of the *Casa Rosada*, in scenes reminiscent of Mussolini, though Peron was less absurdly histrionic.

Peron made the trifecta of Latin American political miscalculation by simultaneously attacking the officer corps of the armed forces, the Roman Catholic Church (Pope Francis is an Argentinian and more or less of a Peronist, like most Argentinians), and the United States.

The new man in Argentinian affairs is Congressman Javier Milei. It is a sign of hope that his recent victory in a presidential primary caused the government to devalue its currency by 18 per cent and to raise the prime lending rate 21 points to a bracing 118 per cent.

Mr. Milei's "Libertarian Anarcho-Capitalist" program includes shutting down the central bank, adopting the United States dollar as Argentina's currency but allowing the private sector to determine whatever means of exchange it wants at any time,

pending the launch of a hard currency (fiat currencies are “counterfeit”).

It also includes dismissing climate change and confining environmental measures to reduction of pollution, sharply lowering taxes, dismissing much of the bureaucracy, scaling back unlimited abortion, imposing social responsibility and financial integrity on organized labor, and giving parents oversight of education.

Mr. Milei has attacked Argentinian schoolteachers as a “corps of brainwashers” and denounced the Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity as an outgrowth of “cultural Marxism.” He has promised to shut it down and sack all of its employees. He has promised the privatization of state-owned enterprises.

Señor Milei has signed the Madrid Charter, a document drafted by the Spanish conservative party Vox that describes Hispanic American left-wing groups as “enemies involved in a criminal project under the umbrella of the Cuban regime.”

Practically all of Latin America is now being led by left-wing politicians, a number of them, including the president of Chile, declared Communists. Mr. Milei has stated that if he is elected, Argentina’s principal allies in the world would be the United States and Israel.

He is a follower of Friedrich Hayek and a reputable and learned free-market economist and economics professor, as well as a radio and television personality. It is indicative of his faith in individual liberty and spontaneity that he declines to comb his hair, though he does wash it reasonably frequently.

Mr. Melei declares that “I don’t have to feel ashamed of being a man, white, and blonde with light blue eyes.” He is personally heterosexual but thoroughly tolerant of those who are not, and he respects religious marriages but as a practitioner of free love personally he describes himself as a

Roman Catholic who reads the Torah every day and has visited the grave of Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the late long-serving head of the Lubavitcher Jewish sect. He has five English mastiffs, four of them named after economists, including Milton (for Milton Friedman).

If a country that has been so stupidly and corruptly misgoverned as Argentina can elevate such a peppy leader, Canada can rightfully cling to the hope that sometime soon it will graduate from being not only a pleasant place to live but also a compound of faddish attitudes and postures, and will become instead a thoughtful, sensible and innovative political beacon to the world. If Argentina can come to its long anesthetized senses, so can we, and we don't need such harsh medicine as Argentina is considering.

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