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By Paula Giménez, Matías Caciabue

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A new, powerful and resisted spring appears in Guatemala



Sources: CLAE

In Guatemala last Sunday, August 20, the people went to the polls for the second time to elect their president, after the day of June 25 that led to the definitive contest to the Seed Political Movement with its formula Bernardo Arévalo de León - Karin Herrera and the National Unity of Hope (UNE). with Sandra Torres Casanova and former pastor Romeo Guerra.

The result, which gave a resounding victory to the son of Juan Jose Arévalo (the first popularly elected president in Guatemala after the Democratic Revolution of 1944) with 2 million 441 thousand 661 votes in his favor, (58%) compared to 1 million 567 thousand 472 votes, (37.2%) of Torres in his third runoff, is the expression of a majority will to transform the country.

Guatemala is characterized by its weak democracy after decades of military rule and civil war and its huge outstanding social debts. Illiteracy levels reach 21.04% (and in some municipalities up to 33.69% in men and 48.63% in women) according to data from the National Literacy Committee, predominantly of indigenous origin. Poverty among children and young people aged 0 to 14 exceeds 62% and urban labor informality climbs to 57%, according to ECLAC reports.

Seed, the movement that emerged in the heat of the street demonstrations against corruption in 2015 was the great surprise of these elections and finally, against the entire economic, media and judicial apparatus that historically occupies the political institutional power, gave the blow. Not without latent risk, facing an assumption that will be effective within five months, on January 14 of next year. Sandra Torres de Casanova even today does not recognize the defeat, much less congratulated her opponent.

It is worth remembering that the establishment installed the narrative of fraud from the day after the first round and the Supreme Electoral Tribunal did not announce the official results until after fifteen days, after the recount of 54% of the votes cast, at the request of the Constitutional Court of Guatemala. From there, an attempt was made to cancel Semilla's participation, without success. The head of the Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity, Rafael Curruchiche, warned on Thursday, August 17, just three days before the election, about possible arrests of Semilla leaders after Sunday, regardless of the results.

The Guatemalan Prosecutor's Office is led by some judges included in the "Engel list" of "corrupt and undemocratic officials" prepared by US intelligence. In an interview that the US ambassador to the country William Popp granted to the newspaper Prensa Libre, he said that President Joe Biden "was very clear two years ago in ensuring that corruption is a threat to national security, and that is a reflection of the commitment of the United States to confront that anywhere. and try to support institutions here in Guatemala." Accordingly, Vice President Kamala Harris, when visiting the Central American country in 2021, announced commitments and investments totaling more than US \$ 4.2 billion in the north of the region, historically subordinated to the interests of Uncle Sam's imperialism, as a supplier of raw materials.

The persecution continues

This Wednesday, the Organization of American States (OAS) denounced that the Public Ministry (Prosecutor's Office) asked the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of the country for information on the "members of the voting receiving boards, members of the body of

reviewers, of the coordinators of digitizers and of the voting centers" of the presidential elections, assuring that it is an "extreme judicialization of the electoral process" that puts democracy in Guatemala at risk.

Despite having won in 17 of the 22 departments of the country, with an overwhelming more than 75% in the central zone, the results are not yet official and therefore, Semilla suspended the official celebrations, while continuing to receive international support from leaders of the region, Europe and Asia, and even Joe Biden. who congratulated Arevalo "on his election as the next President of Guatemala" and added "I look forward to working together to promote prosperity and security in Guatemala." For his part, Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Policy, applauded that the current president Giammattei, has "recognized" the result of the second round of the elections and has accepted the "transfer of power" to the winner.

Beyond the national particularities, recent experiences of progressivism in Latin America and the Caribbean show us that electoral victories for the National Executive are fundamental, but with them it is not enough to carry out a government plan. Arévalo's governability will depend on the (for the moment scarce) alliances he can establish within parliament with the main centrist and right-wing forces.

Deep political fragmentation is one of Guatemala's peculiarities. The until now official party, Vamos, will continue to be the main force in Congress after obtaining 39 deputies (out of 160), while the second force will be the National Unity of Hope (UNE) that considerably reduced its representation from 52 elected in 2019 to 28 deputies, followed by the Seed Movement that will occupy 23 seats. In addition to CABAL, the party of presidential candidate Edmond Mulet will have 18 legislators, while a total of 13 groups will add between one and nine legislators each.

The challenges of the Arevalista spring

The problems that Guatemalan society is going through, the enormous inequality that characterizes it and the need to strengthen the presence and impact of the State in economic, productive and social matters in the country, demand that the political class assume with commitment the message of the polls. It is the will of an entire people, a renewal and a new time.

How will Semilla face social demands? What are the resources and possibilities to deal with social debt? It is possible that one of the viable and urgent ways is to play an active role in economic activity, trying to participate in the exploitation and industrialization with

added value at the origin of available natural resources that include fishing, water, forestry, oil, renewable energy, minerals and a unique biodiversity.

The mining industry in Guatemala, mainly dedicated to the extraction of nickel, silver and gold, for example, is dominated by Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel, S.A. (CGN), which is a subsidiary of Solway Investment Group, HEMCO of the MINEROS Group of Colombian capital, Panama Development of Infrastructures (PDI) and the Ministry of Energy and Mines. The problem is the lack of an effective fiscal policy that contributes to the distribution of wealth and the reduction of territorial conflicts with the affected communities. Sustainable management of natural resources in Guatemala is a crucial challenge that requires careful government planning and regulation.

But not only that, society expects answers in terms of education, health, access to infrastructure for development, access to health and land ownership. The challenges are great, as great is the hope placed in the Seed Political Movement that has been facing the obstacles and the weight of the de facto power of the country. Apparently, a majority is willing to dethrone the small, conservative and aging elite that for centuries, has believed itself to own Guatemala. And it's not.

**Giménez has a degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Security and Defense of the Nation and in International Security and Strategic Studies. Caciabue has a degree in Political Science and Secretary General of the National Defense University UNDEF in Argentina. Both are researchers at the Latin American Center for Strategic Analysis (CLAE)*

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