

# Argentine union bureaucracy asks fascist Milei for “dialogue” after facilitating June 12 repression

Andrea Lobo  
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High-ranking officials of the Confederation of Argentine Workers (CGT) of Argentina have revealed that Pablo Moyano, a co-leader of the CGT and Trucker’s Union, withdrew from the June 12 demonstration outside of the Argentine Congress after the security forces warned him that a police onslaught would begin.

The protest was called in opposition to the so-called “Law of Bases,” which was introduced by fascist President Javier Milei and approved by Senate that evening. The bill, which is expected to pass the lower house with its recent modifications, includes sweeping attacks on labor rights, austerity measures and privatizations.

Moyano led the only minority faction of the CGT that decided to join the demonstration, asserting: “We will be in the streets for as many hours as it takes for the senators to see that there is a mobilized people who are demanding that they vote against this bill.”

At about 3 pm, however, he took the unusual decision to leave with his entire column, even though demonstrators were still only arriving.

Shortly after, riot federal police and gendarmes provoked confrontations by attacking the demonstration with tear gas, water cannon, rubber bullets and batons.

Protesters were hunted down by police on motorcycles up to 20 blocks away to be beaten and arrested. In total, 36 were detained and at least 100 needed medical attention for their injuries. Those arrested and freed—16 remain in custody—said they were struck while interrogated. “How much did they pay you to be here, huh? And what group are you from?” one recounted from his grilling.

The following Tuesday, the daily *Clarín* wrote:

“He had been warned since the day before that at 3:00 p.m. the situation was going to get complicated”, an important *cegetista* chieftain told *Clarín* to explain Moyano’s surprising behavior. Another union member confirmed the same version and said that the trucker had been alerted of possible incidents allegedly by sectors linked to the intelligence services.

The participation of Pablo Moyano and his “Kirchnerist” wing (followers of former Peronist President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner) was evidently a fraudulent pantomime to feign opposition since there was no effort to mobilize their tens of thousands of members for the protest, much less to strike.

The majority of the CGT bureaucracy refused to protest altogether, including the two other general secretaries Héctor Dáer and Carlos Acuña, along with union leaders Gerardo Martínez and Hugo Moyano, the father of Pablo Moyano and long-time trucker union’s chief.

In a conference two weeks earlier, the CGT voted a resolution that stated: “The decision of the Congress, which is a democratic entity, must be respected.” After all, much of the union leadership is composed of capitalist politicians themselves, who hold or have held posts in Congress and the bourgeois Peronist party.

While there are indications of a conflict within the union bureaucracy between the Pablo Moyano wing and the majority, it revolves around tactical differences over how to cover up their subordination to and collaboration with the fascist regime of Milei, as well as disputes over resources and even potential positions within the government.

The unions belonging to the Argentine Workers’ Central (CTA) and the Autonomous CTA sent delegations but also refused to mobilize the rank-and-file and strike, even after the repression started. The cooking oil workers voted massively to strike but the union called it off in response to a court injunction.

CGT officials have explained in public statements that they are satisfied with the course of the talks with the Milei administration. Even though over 100,000 construction workers lost their jobs after Milei ended all public works contracts, Gerardo Martínez, the general secretary of the Construction Workers Union (UOCRA) stressed the “need” not only to maintain “tripartite dialogue as an instrument and a master key to solve serious problems, but that this tripartite dialogue be institutionalized.” He added this should happen regardless of the “government in power.”

The mere consideration that workers have anything to negotiate with Milei exposes the entire union apparatus as a conspiracy against the working class.

Milei and Vice President Victoria Villarruel are fascists who not only have vindicated the torture and killing of tens of thousands of leftist workers and youth under the US-backed military dictatorship in 1976-1983 but are also using the same rhetoric in anticipation of a reimposition of fascist forms of rule. Milei, moreover, has become a global icon of the promotion by the financial oligarchies of the most aggressive attacks against the working class and is one of the most rabid cheerleaders of the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza.

In any case, what has been the result of these union-government talks? Milei has effectively outlawed protests, eliminated hundreds of thousands of social assistance packages, laid off tens of thousands of public employees, and used inflation to impose a historic cut to real wages. The effect of these policies is summarized by the increase of the poverty rate in what was the richest country in Latin America to nearly 60 percent.

For the union bureaucrats, however, the matter was settled when the Milei administration agreed to remove from its “Law of Bases” a clause eliminating automatic union dues for non-members, the so-called “solidarity dues,” thereby securing one of the key sources of income for the bureaucracy.

The only union which struck and mobilized thousands of members on June 12 was the Tire Workers Union (SUTNA), which is led by the pseudo-leftist Workers Party (Partido Obrero, PO). While negotiating wage increases closer to inflation than other unions, the PO and SUTNA have maintained a bankrupt nationalist orientation, appealing to the Peronist union bureaucracy in the CGT and CTAs to call for a national strike and to the courts, Congress, and international bourgeois agencies to oppose state repression, to demand that labor agreements are respected and to oppose the ongoing layoffs, including most recently 97 unjustified layoffs of tire workers. The SUTNA has launched a chauvinistic campaign denouncing “the replacement of Argentine labor with imported foreign Bridgestone tires,” which exposes the PO’s hostility to any struggle to unite workers internationally against global capital.

This perspective is shared by the entire milieu around the Left and Workers Front-Unity (FIT-U), which includes the PO and several Morenoite parties. In its publication *La Izquierda Diario*, the Socialist Workers Party (PTS) lamented that “Moyano betrayed his own words,” and that the CGT and CTA leaderships were responsible for the repression on June 12.

Then, *Izquierda Diario* claims falsely that the government folded before the opposition inside and outside Congress, writing that Milei “had to make major concessions in order to avoid losing everything.” To label “concessions” the changes in the bill, which merely postpone a handful of privatizations and attacks on some social programs and labor rights, is the equivalent of thanking a violent, armed robber for letting you keep an empty wallet and a few teeth.

The insistence of the FIT-U parties that the CGT and CTAs must lead the fight against Milei was primarily responsible for the repression since this blocked the most class conscious and militant workers from breaking with illusions in Peronism and the capitalist state as a whole.

### **It is high time for workers to draw far-reaching conclusions about the nature of the unions**

For decades since the dictatorship, the union apparatus has imposed continuous sellouts and enforced historic attacks against their living standards.

In response to the globalization of capitalist production over the past half century, the trade unions became further integrated into corporate management and the state and became mere contractors selling labor at the cheapest rate to facilitate the movement of capital globally under the banner of remaining “competitive.”

In the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR and the wholesale betrayals globally by the unions and all other nationally based organizations, only the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) drew the conclusion that the trade unions can no longer be called “workers’ organizations.”

As Leon Trotsky, the founder of the Fourth International, explained in 1937, should these organizations “defend the income of the bourgeoisie from attacks on the part of the workers; should they conduct a struggle against strikes, against the rising of wages, against help to the unemployed; then we would have an organization of scabs, not a trade union.”

Now, the once thriving industries in Argentina are at the receiving end of massive layoffs as a battering ram to cheapen labor and transform the economy into a playground for financial speculation, the extraction of natural gas, oil, lithium and other key minerals, and cheap agricultural exports.

Three days before the repression on June 12, Security Minister Patricia

Bullrich announced a police Unit for Productive Security, which will focus on ports, industrial centers and key mining and gas deposits. “We will combat all crimes that harm productivity. We will not allow the blocking of the entrances of companies to prevent them from producing,” she explained. Bullrich added: “We aspire to lower the cost of Argentina.”

The “Law of Bases” version approved by the Senate also bans picket lines, declaring that “the active participation in roadblocks or workplace occupations” is a legitimate cause for dismissal.

As the ruling class prepares dictatorial and fascistic forms of rule, the union bureaucracy is vying for positions and privileges in the new set-up, touting their own role in repressing workers before the 1976 fascist-military coup and collaboration with the dictatorship itself.

In April 2023, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman declared the CGT a “model” for the entire region after meeting a delegation led by Gerardo Martínez, who also acts as the confederation’s foreign relations secretary. The *World Socialist Web Site* commented at the time:

The US designation of the CGT as a “model” form of trade unionism has particularly sinister implications, given the history of this right-wing apparatus during the run-up to the 1976 military coup. It played the leading role in organizing the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance, or Triple A, a network of death squads that killed and disappeared hundreds of militant and left-wing workers and even union delegates in an attempt to quell the mounting uprising by workers and youth.

Hugo Moyano of the Trucker’s Union played an active role in the Triple A. In the mid-1970s, moreover, the CGT was openly celebrating the military’s “anti-subversive” struggle against left-wing militants and guerrillas. The connections of the Moyanos to the intelligence agencies under Milei’s fascistic regime, as highlighted by the June 12 events, should be a warning to workers everywhere.

The “CGT model” being promoted by the Biden administration is that established by Juan Perón, who had returned from being a military attaché in Mussolini’s fascist Italy hoping to reproduce the Duce’s transformation of the trade unions into an appendage of the capitalist state. During his first government (1946-1955), Perón used the relative wealth of the country and rapid industrialization after World War II to implement major social reforms and build up a corporatist union bureaucracy loyal to himself, primarily as a means of blocking the growth of socialist influence in the working class. When conditions changed, this union apparatus became a direct participant in the police state.

“In time of war or revolution, when the bourgeoisie is plunged into exceptional difficulties,” as Trotsky wrote in the *Transitional Program*, “trade union leaders usually become bourgeois ministers.” Consequently, the Fourth International should strive “to create in all possible instances independent militant organizations corresponding more closely to the tasks of mass struggle against bourgeois society; and, if necessary, not flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions,” Trotsky added.



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