

Argentine trade union bureaucracy deepens partnership with fascist President Javier Milei

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On December 5, the Confederation of Argentine Workers (CTA) led a series of mass nationwide protests demanding the ouster of fascist President Javier Milei. The CTA includes government workers, teachers and movie workers, whose jobs and wages have been brutally attacked by the austerity measures of the Milei administration.

The CTA demonstrators were joined by students, retired workers, casual or informal workers, members of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, mothers of victims of the 1976-83 military dictatorship, representatives of the nation's soup kitchens and Stalinist and pseudo-left organizations.

Notable in their absence were unions represented by the General Workers Confederation (*Confederación General de los Trabajadores*-CGT), Argentina's oldest and largest labor organization.

The absence of the CGT unions was in keeping with a decision made 16 days prior to the December 5 protests. On November 19, the top CGT bureaucrats declared a "truce" with the Milei administration, postponing all strikes or protests at least until 2025, and canceling all talk of a "strategy of struggle" (*plan de lucha*).

Pablo Moyano, who heads the Truckers union (*Camioneros*), opposed the truce declaration, did not attend the November 19 meeting and resigned from his post as part of the triumvirate of the CGT and then from the confederation altogether. He still refused to participate on December 5.

In Moyano's absence, the remaining leaders of the CGT apparatus chose to participate in a three-party dialogue, including the Milei administration, big business and the unions.

Moyano's resignation was noted and welcomed by government officials, as part of the government's attack on what Milei refers to as the "caste," a term that he uses to characterize all those allegedly enjoying "privileges" from their ties to the public sector, ranging from the establishment political parties to the unions, university professors and impoverished pensioners.

According to the CGT leadership, there are signs that the economy is improving and that jobs are coming back to construction and other industries. For that reason, it has suspended all protests and instead will negotiate with the Milei administration and big business. Moyano's supporters in the

Truckers union wanted a 36-hour, year-end national protest strike.

While the CGT was launched in the 1930s as a conglomeration of anarchist, Stalinist and socialist trade unions, with the ascent of President Juan Peron to power in 1943, as part of a military junta, it quickly integrated itself into his bourgeois nationalist movement. During a period of post-war abundance, Peronism attempted to bridge the interests of the industrial capitalists with those of the workers. The CGT formed the Labor Party that initially got Peron elected in 1946.

By 1952, Argentina's economy went into decline and gave way, under Peron, to an inflationary epoch, which culminated in Peron's overthrow by a fascistic, Catholic faction of the military. However, many of the concessions made by Argentine capitalism to workers, remained in place.

Under Milei, what was left of the reforms won through decades of struggle by the Argentine working class, involving wages, social security, healthcare subsidies, public education, working hours and working conditions, is now being thrown out to attract investment capital. This is what the CGT is now agreeing not to resist. The so-called truce is in fact a surrender of the remaining, historic gains of the working class.

After Peron's ouster, the CGT remained dominated by the fascistic wing of the Peronist movement. When Peron returned to Argentina on June 20, 1973 after 18 years in exile, CGT goons armed with rifles joined an attack against crowds of radicalized Peronist students and young workers who were waiting at the Ezeiza Airport for their leader to land. The Ezeiza Massacre left 13 dead and an unknown number of wounded, and it set the stage for the formation of the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (Triple A) death squads associated with the CGT, including then Truckers union leader Hugo Moyano, the father of Pablo Moyano.

By suppressing the revolutionary struggles of the Argentine working class since 1968 against the deepening attacks on their organizations and social and working conditions, the CGT leadership played a fundamental role in paving the way for the installation of a fascist military junta through the US-backed coup that overthrew the Peronists in March 1976 and the even more brutal repression that followed.

To this day, the CGT supports the Peronist factions whose

representatives in Congress, governors and other officials have facilitated Milei's austerity measures.

The CGT also resolved to improve its relationship with the Catholic Church, the most politically reactionary organization that exists in Argentina, proposing to initiate a "new stage" in its relationship with the top Catholic leaders.

Milei now has the support of virtually every section of the bourgeoisie— agrarian, industrial, extractive and financial. At the same time, he is tying the Argentine military to that of the United States and aligning his foreign policy to Washington's, while identifying with extreme Zionism, down to the constant use of biblical allusions.

Far from being an enemy of the ruling "caste" or big government, he is creating a corporatist state, in the manner of the Italian fascist Benito Mussolini, where all the institutions are organs of the state to guarantee the upward flow of profits to the banks and big bourgeoisie.

While the CTA leaders have taken a more combative posture, through short protest strikes and mass demonstrations, the intention of this union apparatus is to pressure Milei and Congress to reverse certain austerity policies, along with the cuts to pensions and to jobs and wages for government workers.

The union bureaucracy is accompanied in this bankrupt enterprise and provided a "left" cover by the pseudo-left organizations of the United Workers' Left Front (FIT-U), an electoral alliance of four parties claiming to be Trotskyist. These parties have continued to channel opposition behind the CGT, CTA and Pablo Moyano by appealing to them to take the lead through calling more strikes and advancing a "strategy of struggle."

Last month, Milei's *Libertad Avanza* joined the Peronist legislators in blocking a bill called "Union Democracy" introduced by the rival Civic Radical Union Party, introducing limits to the re-election of union leaders, a greater representation for minority factions in leadership bodies, the elimination of mandatory "solidarity dues" for non-members, and steps toward "democratizing" the union health insurance firms, which are managed to enrich the bureaucrats.

A month earlier, Milei's chief of staff, Guillermo Francos, ordered the ruling party legislators in the Congressional Labor Commission to vote against the bill based explicitly on a request made by the CGT. They helped boycott the bill until the last moment. Only once it was clearly going to fail, five *Libertad Avanza* legislators voted for the bill in order to maintain their alliance with the Radicals.

The one legislator of the pseudo-left FIT-U in the commission, Alejandro Vilca of the Socialist Workers Party (PTS), also rejected the bill, which was finally defeated by one vote. Even more significantly, he kept quiet in his intervention about the corrupt partnership of the Milei administration with the Peronist union bureaucracy, making clear that the FIT-U politicians and union leaders themselves act as a left flank for the capitalist corporatist set-up, whether it is under the

Peronists or the fascistic Milei.

The Milei administration had already agreed to eliminate 42 articles of its Labor Reform that would have eliminated mandatory dues payments for non-members and access to other privileges for the union bureaucracy. These measures benefit the CGT, the CTA and the unions led by the pseudo-left.

US imperialism, which worked closely and financed the fascistic Peronist unions during the 1960s and 1970s, has not only encouraged this partnership between the union apparatus and Milei, but it sees it as an example for the incoming Trump administration to follow. Biden's Labor Department held several meetings with the CGT leadership and Milei officials, insisting that they work together, while calling the Peronist union apparatus a "model."

After one such meeting with Biden's US ambassador to Argentina, Marc Stanley, the now malcontent Pablo Moyano said: "In fact, we were surprised: he is much more Peronist than many of our own. He highlighted the social and labor function that unions in the US have."

Now, the leadership of the American union bureaucracy is scrambling to ingratiate itself with Trump and his nominated cabinet of billionaires and fascists. This was most clearly expressed by the support by AFL-CIO President Liz Schuler, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, Teamsters President Sean O'Brien and other bureaucrats for Trump's nomination of Republican Lori Chavez-DeRemer for secretary of Labor.

The Argentine working class can defend its rights only by joining its struggles with those of the working class internationally. The fight against Milei and his imperialist backers is bound up with the fight to establish socialist governments of the working class: to abolish the nation state, take over the means of production, and manage industries, farms and the banking system democratically. The first step has to be the building of a genuine Trotskyist party in Argentina as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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