

Cables document relations between Castro and Argentine junta

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The Argentine government of Cristina Kirchner (Peronist) last week published a searchable database consisting of almost 6,000 public and secret documents made available and declassified by the Foreign Ministry.

The diplomatic exchanges expose some of the darkest years of Latin American history, following the seizure of power by Argentine Commander Jorge Rafael Videla. The right-wing dictator headed a military coup in March 1976 that overthrew President Isabel Perón, wife of former President Juan Perón.

Among them, various cables issued in 1977 document diplomatic exchanges between Cuba's president Fidel Castro and Videla. According to these cables, in 1977 Videla supported Cuba's bid to join the Executive Council of the World Health Organization, while Castro would nominate Argentina to the United Nations' Economic and Social Council.

In particular, cables in April and September 1977 show the proposal and confirmation of such a quid pro quo arrangement.

The media has portrayed the revelation of diplomatic ties between Castro and Videla as an exposé of two equally reprehensible dictators, leaving serious political questions out of readers' sight. This is not a coincidence, but a deliberate attempt to defame socialism by falsely portraying Castro as a "communist" dictator on a par with fascist military juntas, at a time when workers are engaging in class struggles worldwide.

Videla's regime is forever identified in history with its unspeakable crimes against workers and youth. He erected a violent and repressive police state, killing tens of thousands. Operations like the "Dirty War" and "Operation Condor" became synonymous with mass murder, "disappearances" and torture. Three US administrations (Ford, Carter and Reagan) were complicit in the seven-year bloodbath.

Castro, replaced in 2008 by his brother Raul, came to power in 1959 through a petty-bourgeois nationalist revolution, as the collapse of the right-wing Batista regime catapulted him into power. His limited agrarian and social

reforms and allegiance to Cuban Stalinism and the Soviet Union provided the foundation upon which he sought to present himself as a staunch opponent of imperialism.

The myth of guerrillaism, supported by Pabloites and other "left" opportunists, not only attributed a revolutionary role to the petty bourgeoisie. It also helped disorient an entire generation of youth in Latin America. This had disastrous consequences, and it never brought the working class to power. Chile's experience most starkly revealed the bankruptcy and catastrophic consequences of Castroism.

In 1971, Castro and the Stalinist Communist Party were primarily responsible for the derailment of a genuine socialist revolution. Standing shoulder to shoulder with President Salvador Allende, Castro advised workers that Chile was not Cuba and that, in light of that country's history, a parliamentary path, not a revolutionary one, would represent the "Chilean road to socialism."

The result was the disarming of workers, who were thus unable to undertake an independent revolutionary struggle and were left unprepared for the military and right-wing parties led by the infamous General Augusto Pinochet, which overthrew Allende and installed a dictatorship that killed tens of thousands of workers.

Castro's ambivalent response to Pinochet's arrest in 1998 in Spain shed some light on his politics. According to Castro, the arrest of a military dictator who killed thousands "is going to create a complicated situation in Chile, because of the form in which the political process has developed there."

Such a statement erases any remaining doubt that the Cuban leader is not on the side of social revolution in Latin America.

However, there is no equivalence between petty-bourgeois radicalism of the Castroite variety and the fascistic violence of a US-backed military junta. While Videla was carrying out a criminal "dirty war," committing horrific crimes with the support of US imperialism, Cuba remained the target of crippling sanctions. This took place in the context of an international assault on the working class, led especially by

Ronald Reagan in the US and Margaret Thatcher in the UK.

In an even clearer example, the Malvinas/Falklands war illustrated Castro's collaboration with the Argentine military government of General Leopoldo Galtieri in 1982. At the time, his right-wing military junta, the successor to Videla's regime, used Argentina's historically legitimate claim to the islands as a diversion from its own brutal policies at home.

Two years ago, the Brazilian paper *O Globo* published declassified documents showing Castro's collaboration in the clandestine arms sale to Argentina organized by the USSR in support of the junta.

There is also the question of why the Argentine government allows such documents to emerge only now. Argentina's economy defaulted on sovereign debt last July and, while it pulled out of recession in the second quarter, economists now expect a contraction of up to 2 percentage points.

Social tensions are reaching a boiling point. This year saw major general strikes. The government is thus seeking to defuse opposition, given the reactionary anti-worker agenda it plans to implement.

President Christina Fernandez de Kirchner is a leading representative of the Peronist wing of the national bourgeoisie. Juan Perón was president from 1946 to 1955, then from 1973 to his death in July 1974.

Perón was a military man who defended bourgeois interests through nationalist populist policies. He relied on the assistance of sections of the corporatist labor bureaucracy in exchange for concessions in the form of social programs such as universal health care, social security and wage increases. He did not hesitate to violently suppress opposition, even inside his party, however.

In his third term, in the 1970s, Perón's orientation shifted in relation to the development of the crisis of Argentine and world capitalism. He sought to counter the momentum gained by workers in the 1969 Cordobazo uprising. After an initial policy of nationalization and concessions to the working class, the 1973 oil crisis, inflation and a stubborn budget deficit deepened the internal conflicts inside the Peronist party, and resulted in a turn to tougher policies against the working class.

Conflicts among trade union factions became significant under Perón. Within a short time killings of leftists and moderates took place under the direction of the right wing of the Peronist leadership, such as Perón's advisor José López Rega, Social Welfare minister, who secretly led the ultra-right group AAA (Argentine Anticommunist Alliance), responsible for the disappearance and death of scores of youth and workers, before the 1976 coup.

Following Peron's death, his wife Isabel served as President from 1974 to 1976. By the time she inherited the

massive crisis, right-wing forces were already setting up a new order. Her regime was overthrown by the Videla-led coup.

Cristina Kirchner and her late husband, President Néstor Kirchner, have frequently exposed the atrocities of the junta as part of their "left" posturing. Politically, the recent database is part of that stance. Ultimately, its purpose is to obscure Peron's own crimes and divert anger and opposition away from the current Peronist regime.

The "Nunca Mas" (Never Again) report issued in 1984 by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons documents 500 murders and 600 disappearances during the Peronist government of 1973-76.

Moreover, a counterrevolutionary repression called "Operation Independence" was carried out in Tucuman in December 1975, under the presidency of Isabel Perón. A wave of murder, kidnappings and torture was spearheaded by thugs of the right-wing Peronist union bureaucracy against left-wing opposition, including that of their own union members.

In 2008, an extradition order by Argentina's courts issued against Perón, related to her complicity with the AAA, was denied by Spain on the basis of a 20-year statute of limitations. Kirchner is still in regular correspondence with the 83-year-old Perón.

In the twentieth century, the Latin American working class suffered bloody repression by right-wing military dictatorships alongside complex betrayals by fake "socialists." In the twenty-first century, the lessons of these experiences and the ability to distinguish class enemies are still literally questions of life and death.

Such a process starts from the clarification of fundamental historical and theoretical questions to sweep away false myths—such as the claim that Castro and Che Guevara pursued a socialist program—used by the pseudo-left to obstruct the path to world revolution.



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