

Obama hails Macri's attacks on Argentine workers

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US President Barack Obama arrived in Buenos Aires on Wednesday March 23, on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the CIA-backed military coup that installed the fascist military junta of Gen. Jorge Videla.

Amidst a massive police operation, involving helicopters and military surveillance and fighter planes—some 700 security personnel had arrived earlier in Buenos Aires to prepare for the US president's arrival—Obama moved to Argentina's Government House, the Casa Rosada, met with the recently installed Argentine president Mauricio Macri and gave a press conference.

An effusive Macri welcomed Obama: "This is your house," he declared. In a reference to Obama's visit to Argentina and Cuba, Macri praised the US for trying to establish a "mature" relationship with the nations in the region.

In turn, Obama called for the US and Argentina to become "universal allies" and praised the new president for his measures of economic shock that have so far resulted in the destruction of more than 100,000 public sector jobs, wiped out energy subsidies and devastated living standards.

The US head of state predicted that Macri's economic reforms would place Argentina on the path of "sustainable" economic growth. He also predicted that US capitalists would launch an investment program in Argentina.

"I can tell you President Macri is a man in hurry," said Obama; "I'm impressed because he has moved rapidly on so many of the reforms that he promised, to create more sustainable and inclusive economic growth, to reconnect Argentina with the global economy and the world community." This was a thinly veiled reference to the Macri administration's decision to pay off the Wall Street vulture funds that acquired billions

of dollars worth of Argentina's pre-2002 debt.

Obama also indicated that the US would collaborate with Argentina on security questions and that the US and Argentina had signed a pact to combat drug trafficking. As he did in Cuba during the previous three days, Obama posed as a defender of civil liberties and open government. He referred to Argentina as one of the "most powerful nations" in Latin America that could become a "key ally" of Washington in the region.

"Argentina is re-assuming its traditional leadership role in the region and around the world," declared Obama. Those words are ominous, given the content of a US State Department information press release that was issued following Obama's discussions with Macri on Wednesday. Washington desires a closer military and security relationship between the US and Argentina so that the latter can bear a greater share of the "peace-keeping" burden as a junior partner in US imperialism's war agenda.

Buried in a list of proposed areas of cooperation, such as nuclear research and clean air, there is a proposal for the beefing up of Argentine military reserves so that the Argentine armed forces can better intervene in so-called peace-keeping operations in Africa and elsewhere.

In addition to military equipment upgrades, cooperation against drug trafficking and supposed terrorism in the "triple border" region of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, the discussions with Macri envision close cooperation between the two countries' intelligence agencies. In May of this year, the US Treasury Department will organize its first-ever working-round-table with the Argentine Armed Forces. Similar agreements were discussed involving the US Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security departments.

Obama said he would visit Memory Park (*Parque de*

la Memoria), a monument on the shore of the La Plata River to the 30,000 victims of the Videla dictatorship to honor the dead and missing. He also confirmed that Washington would declassify US military and intelligence records related to the junta, as a confidence-building measure between both nations.

March 24 is a day of remembrance in Argentina, marking the anniversary of the Videla coup that the US supported in 1976. Following the coup, it helped establish an alliance between the military regimes that ruled in Uruguay, Brazil, Chile and Argentina in the 1960s and 1970s and assisted in the blood bath that followed. Under its Plan Condor, the CIA and US military intelligence trained the torturers and executioners and helped hunt down and disappear the workers and youth that Obama now honors in the name of human rights and transparency.

As in Cuba, where he cast over a half century of US aggression as ancient history, Obama is attempting to portray Washington's support for coups as some long-gone era. But as recently as 2009, his own administration helped orchestrate the overthrow of the elected president of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya.

The timing of Obama's visit is a source of anger among many Argentines, who see his hypocritical gestures as part of an attempt to wipe out the memory of the crimes committed by US imperialism in the country and broader region.

In an emotive open letter, 20 Argentine and one Uruguayan family members of disappeared individuals repudiated Obama's trip and particularly his visit to the *Parque* in the company of the right-wing president Macri:

"His arrival, forty years after the anniversary of the civic and military coup, is a provocation against those of us who have fought during decades against impunity. It is an insult to the memory of our 30,000 arrested and disappeared comrades to welcome to our country the president of the nation that promoted and supported the bloodiest military coup that Argentina ever experienced, as in other nations in this region. Many of us lost our sons, parents, family members and comrades, who were all victims of *Plan Condor*, operated by the United States, and out of which the activities of the armed forces and intelligence agencies of Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Paraguay were coordinated, to assassinate thousands of

militant workers and students that kept resisting the dictatorships. ... Now, forty years after, the US announces that it will open the archives related to the Argentine dictatorship...but we all know that companies such as Ford that had clandestine detention centers in their plants will remain unpunished and no American official will ever be tried in court for participating in the Argentine genocide. ... Now more than ever: We do not forget, we do not forgive, we do not reconcile."



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