

Peronism leans on the pseudo-left FIT-U to implement IMF austerity in Argentina

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Facing an imminent default on the public debt, Argentine President Alberto Fernández announced new pension cuts and other austerity measures this week as he renegotiates about \$100 billion in debt payments, beginning with \$44 billion owed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Last year, the anger over millions falling below the official poverty line, hundreds of thousands losing their jobs and many more seeing their living standards collapse under the preceding government of Mauricio Macri was derailed by the Peronist trade unions and parties through Hollywood strikes and promises that a Fernández election would end austerity measures and improve social conditions.

However, the Peronist authorities have dedicated their first two months in office to reassuring investors that they will brutally pursue austerity and use police-state measures to crush opposition. There is no other interpretation for Fernández visiting Israel, seeking the backing of the fascistic Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and inviting foreign troops into the country.

On February 7, Jorge Arguello, the Argentine ambassador in Washington, proudly reported to CNN that after visiting the State Department, the Pentagon, the IMF and other imperialist institutions, he managed to secure a message from Donald Trump that Fernández can “count on him” during the IMF talks. The IMF proclaimed last Thursday that it would reject a “significant” reduction of the Argentine debt.

With popular anger redirecting toward them, the Peronist parties and unions are now relying on the Left Workers Front-Unity (FIT-U) to prevent workers from drawing the necessary conclusions, that is, recognizing the bourgeois class character of the government and the deadly, counterrevolutionary danger it represents.

In its publications, interviews with corporate outlets and interventions in Congress, the FIT-U is portraying the

regime as a classless arbitrator that simply has the wrong tactics to confront the IMF and defend Argentina. Nowhere does it state that the only “national interest” is that of the bourgeoisie, which can be secured only by means of intensifying the exploitation of Argentine workers to compete for foreign capital and markets.

The 2001 default and the current crisis have left no room for doubt that, facing the threat of punishing capital flight, an end to austerity requires that the working class expropriate the ill-gotten wealth of the entire financial aristocracy, and the transnational and major local corporations, while appealing to workers internationally, particularly in the US and Europe, to defend and expand these measures.

On Wednesday, after the Economy Minister, Martín Guzmán presented the government’s austerity measures with rosy colors to Congress—referring to the horrid 2.3 percent inflation rate for January as a marvel—the two FIT-U legislators, Rominá del Plá (Workers Party-PO) and Nicolás del Caño (Workers Revolutionary Party-PTS), called for the repudiation of the debt, while describing it as the fault of the Macri administration.

After the session, the TV channel Crónica exploded their bluff about repudiating the debt, inquiring of del Plá what would happen afterward. The news hosts directly asked whether there was “a similar context” to imperialist war and the Russian Revolution. She dodged the question and said, “Look, we are in a situation of integral submission, of growing crises ... What is more, minister Guzmán himself analyzes in theoretical works the inability to renegotiate those types of funds to bring countries forward.”

The channel C5N asked del Caño directly whether the Peronists are responsible for the situation facing retirees, and he simply insisted that paying the debt “goes against popular interests,” adding that some Peronists backed the cuts of the previous government and others opposed them.

However, he completely ignored the role of the Peronists under Macri in suppressing popular opposition.

While acting as a propaganda tool for the Peronists, the FIT-U called a march on Wednesday separate from that of the main trade union confederations to protest the arrival in Argentina of IMF officials. The FIT-U presented their differences in the vaguest terms, such as “those of us who are willing to defend the future without fissures and those who are willing to negotiate it.”

Not only does the FIT-U lead several trade unions that remain within the Peronist confederations after decades of constant betrayals, but they continue to call upon workers to appeal to the union apparatus. On February 11 and 13, *La Izquierda Diario*, published by PTS, called for the “trade union centrals” to convolve a women’s day strike that includes the demand of repudiating the debt.

A January 27 piece denouncing the “social pact” called for by the Peronists adds in the same breadth “the demand to the trade-union centrals and sectors to break their truce with the governments and convolve assemblies to develop a plan of struggle...”

The PO and Nahuel Moreno, the PTS’s political predecessor, used just such appeals to chain workers to the Peronist trade unions through the 1968-1976 revolutionary upheavals, even when the Peronist bureaucracy formed assassination squads against left-wing workers. These political tendencies had long rejected Trotskyism and worked to subordinate workers to different forms of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalism.

Far from drawing the lessons from this period, the current edition of *Ideas de Izquierda*, printed by PTS, includes four essays about the 1969 Cordobazo uprising, with only one mentioning Moreno, applauding his refusal to follow his ally Mario Santucho into dissolving their Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) into a guerrilla *foco* in 1968. The road to guerrillaism fatally pursued by Santucho, however, had been paved by Moreno, who had already declared himself a “Castroite” and claimed that the Cuban Revolution showed “we have overcome the Trotskyist framework that only the proletariat is the vanguard of the revolution.”

Instead, the PTS is laying the groundwork for new betrayals, demonstrating that it too represents class interests antagonistic to those of the working class.

In the same issue of *Ideas de Izquierda*, Juan Dal Maso advances the sophistry that “the recycled Peronisms of the last decades have heterogeneous and superimposed social bases,” thus concealing the thoroughly bourgeois

character of the Peronist parties and trade unions. He then explains that “perhaps this move [of Peronism] toward conservatism is related to the ‘present absences’ in [Ernesto] Laclau’s theory.” In other words, Peronism is shifting to the right because it lacks the correct populist discourse to sell the idea that it represents this “heterogeneous,” that is supra-class, collective.

This is what FIT-U is seeking to help with when it appeals to Peronism, casting it as “progressive” and “reformist,” and insisting the trade unions are still “workers organizations.” The FIT-U poses, in the words of Trotsky, “the demand that the devil should *generally* become converted to Christianity, and that he use his horns not against workers and peasants but exclusively for pious deeds. In presenting such conditions, we act in reality as the devil’s advocates and beg him to let us become his godfathers.”

Trotsky continued: “The independent intervention of the proletariat on the revolutionary arena threatens to deprive the bourgeoisie of the possibility to exploit altogether.” One might add that it also threatens the privileges of the upper middle class layers in the trade unions and academia whose interests are reflected in the politics of the FIT-U.

A genuine struggle against the IMF austerity diktats requires the mobilization of the working class under a socialist and internationalist program, in unwavering opposition to Peronism and its pseudo-left apologists. This means building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Argentina and globally.



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