

Morenoites promote vaccine nationalism in Argentina

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As Argentina faces a catastrophic second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 30,000 daily cases and 550 daily deaths in a population of just 44 million, the Morenoites of the Socialist Workers Party (PTS), in coordination with their allies in the pseudo-left Workers and Left Front parliamentary grouping (FIT-U), are demanding that the Peronist government of President Alberto Fernandez ban the export of vaccine components being produced in the country to the rest of Latin America, in order to speed up the vaccinations of Argentinians.

The PTS and the FIT-U stepped up their campaign for this reactionary nationalist demand as the second wave gathered pace in late March, and the Argentine pseudo-lefts worked to assist and cover up the role of the Peronist unions in keeping workers in highly-contagious workplaces and pushing teachers and students back into schools.

As with the rest of Latin America, Africa and Asia, Argentina is facing severe shortages of vaccines, with just 7 percent of the population fully vaccinated thus far. Still, the number is much higher than in some of the largest countries in the region, such as Colombia and Peru, which have suffered from even worse COVID-19 outbreaks, not to mention the poorest countries in the region, such as Bolivia and Paraguay, where only 5 percent of the population has received a single shot.

The bulk of the shots distributed in the country so far have been of the Russian-designed Sputnik V and the Chinese-produced Sinopharm vaccines, while a minority were AstraZeneca's Covishield doses, the target of the Morenoites' export ban demand.

The Mexican and Argentine governments had struck a deal with AstraZeneca in August aimed at producing 150 million doses for Latin America in 2021, with components being made in Argentina and the fractioning and bottling carried out in Mexico. In Argentina, components are being produced in the mAbxience plant in the town of Garín, in the northern Buenos Aires industrial belt. While the company has been able to produce components for over 40 million vaccines, it took until the last week of May for the first 1.6 million doses to be distributed in Mexico and Argentina, with AstraZeneca admitting to multiple delays in the Liomont plant in Mexico, and blaming some of them on a holdup on the shipment of industrial components from the United States.

On March 31, in a week that saw a 36 percent rise in daily new COVID-19 cases, the FIT-U organized a stunt in front of the mAbxience plant with the motto "the missing vaccines are in Garín," where FIT-U legislators presented their bill demanding the export ban. The two-time presidential candidate for the FIT-U, House member Nicolás del Caño, declared in blunt fashion, "from here they took the equivalent of 40 million doses. That means almost half of the Argentine population could have been vaccinated."

A day before, the PTS had posted on its website *Izquierda Diario* an article by senior member Patricio del Corro in which he called the exports a "theft" ("se fugaron").

The bill became the center of FIT-U's intervention before over a thousand teachers, in an online meeting of the Ademys union that called for a 48-hour stoppage opposing the back-to-school order of Buenos Aires Mayor Horacio Larreta, of the right-wing opposition to the Fernandez government. The Morenoites pushed the assembled teachers into signing a petition complaining of "exports to Mexico" while feigning concern about how "the population suffers the consequences of an escalation of the pandemic."

Such reactionary policies expose any pretense that the PTS and its pseudo-left allies in Argentina and internationally, organized around the *Izquierda Diario* "network" of websites, are in any way associated with Marxism or socialist internationalism. Their demand for a vaccine export ban is in no way related to a working-class perspective. Instead it copies the most reactionary politics thrown up by the capitalist nation-state system.

Last month, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus charged that the global distribution of vaccines was characterized by "a scandalous inequity that is perpetuating the pandemic." He added that "a small group of countries that make and buy the majority of the world's vaccines control the fate of the rest of the world."

The Morenoites offer no opposition to this "scandalous inequity." Rather, in a distinct echo of the faded pretensions of the Argentine ruling class, they think that Argentina should be a member of that "small group of countries."

In Mexico itself, where the umbrella organization to which PTS is affiliated, the misnamed "Trotskyist Fraction" (FT-CI)

has a section, there was no attempt on the part of the Morenoites to mobilize workers at the Liomont plant to guarantee the shipping of the scheduled vaccines to the rest of Latin America.

On the contrary, offering a “left” cover for the close alignment of the Mexican ruling class with US imperialism, the PTS’s counterpart, the Socialist Workers Movement (MTS), promoted a thoroughly anti-scientific campaign to discredit the AstraZeneca vaccine. The MTS complained in a February 18 article that “the least effective vaccine in the world” was being used to immunize “Mexican grandpas.” This uncritically echoed arguments being used by the US and the continental European powers at the height of their campaign against the vaccine, based on conflicting imperialist interests completely alien to scientific results.

The demand by the Argentine Morenoites for an “Argentina first” vaccination policy explodes whatever claims the make of solidarity with their “sister parties” in Latin America, much less with the billions of working people internationally who have been denied access to vaccines.

It is a particularly grotesque expression of their subordination and orientation to the national bourgeoisie in every country in which they operate, the foremost unifying feature of their international association. The COVID-19 pandemic has vastly deepened national rivalries, pushing imperialist and backward countries alike into increased interstate capitalist competition, military buildups and authoritarian forms of rule.

The FT-CI Morenoites have studiously followed and covered up such moves in country after country, even to the point of pitching their Argentine and Mexican sections into almost direct conflict.

In Spain, their CRT affiliate has aligned itself with the Francoist right-wing opposition to the treacherous Socialist Party-Podemos government, in calling even the ineffectual social distancing measures decreed by the government an intolerable infringement on individual liberties. In France, their CCR current, which operates inside the NPA, has supported the Macron government’s push to send youth back into universities amid the pandemic’s second wave, by aligning themselves with the government’s hypocritical claim of concern over students’ mental health.

In Brazil, where their MRT organization orients itself to the pseudo-left PSOL, they have aligned themselves with the fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump in promoting hydroxychloroquine as a COVID cure.

The Morenoites have also, through their US mouthpiece, the *Left Voice*, promoted illusions in the eternal stability of US capitalism, downplaying Trump’s coup attempt and promoting the Biden presidency, writing that the “amount of concessions” his government would offer workers depended upon applying pressure through the corporatist unions.

In fact, the recent expansion of the Morenoites’ operations in Latin America to the US and Europe, financed by the resources

of their Argentine parliamentary-unionist machine, is aimed at using their decades-old experience in propping up the corrupt ruling classes of Latin America to facilitate the betrayal of US and European workers’ struggles.

Nowhere has this role been clearer than in Argentina, where the old Pabloite Nahuel Moreno first founded the current that gave rise to the FT-CI. Its aim was to subordinate the working class to “the discipline of General Perón,” a slogan inscribed on the masthead of its newspaper. In the 1970s, such subordination resulted in the disarming of the powerful offensive of the Argentine working class, paving the way for the murderous repression of the Videla military-fascist regime.

Now that it is back in power, Peronism faces widespread hostility toward its herd immunity policy and the economic catastrophe resulting from its handling of the pandemic. The share of Argentines living in poverty has climbed to 42 percent, while child poverty now stands at a staggering 57 percent, with 10 percent of the population living in extreme poverty. At the same time, annual inflation has accelerated to 105 percent.

Under these conditions, the Peronist government is desperate to revive its old nationalist demagoguery against “foreign interests,” in an attempt to defuse growing social opposition.

As the Morenoites stepped up their “Argentines first” vaccination policy, the Peronist government was preparing a ban on beef exports, in order to deflect blame for the crisis epitomized by an all-time low in meat consumption. At the same time, the government is facing growing opposition to its continued commitment to meeting payments on its US\$45 billion debt to the IMF, and to its negotiations with Brazil and Uruguay on a radical slashing of their common import tariff, which will see increased competition by the three countries on the world market, resulting in a further lowering of the living standards of workers across the region.

The unraveling of the fraudulent “internationalism” of the FT-CI/ *Izquierda Diario* coalition exposes the real reasons for their misuse of the terms “Marxist” and “Trotskyist.” Their attempt to equate Marxism with populist demagoguery and now, under the pressure of the growth of capitalist inter-state rivalry, reactionary nationalism, is aimed at poisoning public consciousness and blocking the development of a genuine socialist and internationalist leadership in the working class. The fight to build that leadership, based upon the legacy of Marxism, the Russian Revolution, Trotsky’s fight against Stalinism and the protracted struggle against Pabloite revisionism, is undertaken solely by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).



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