

Oligarchs in Davos applaud fascist rant by Argentine President Milei

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19 January 2024

The World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland featured an outright fascist rant pronounced by Argentina's new president, Javier Milei, who scolded billionaires and their states and institutions for failing to stand up for capitalism.

The glowing reception from the crowd, which ostensibly gathers the more "respectable" layers of the oligarchy and establishment, adds to the signs of a shift toward fascism in the entire ruling class.

US billionaire Elon Musk praised Wednesday's speech, describing it as a "good explanation of what makes countries more or less prosperous."

Similarly, Fox News and other right-wing media outlets hailed Milei, declaring he had "dazzled Davos" with "truth bombs" and "common sense."

Having called it "a forum contaminated by the 2030 socialist agenda" on his way to Davos, Milei was warmly presented by WEF founder Klaus Schwab, who said Milei is "introducing a new spirit to Argentina."

The former Argentine TV personality said: "I'm here to tell you that the Western world is in danger. And it is in danger because those who are supposed to have to defend the values of the West are co-opted by a vision of the world that inexorably leads to socialism."

He proceeded to tell a fairy tale straight out of Disney. Since 1800, capitalism had pulled 95 percent of the world's population out of extreme poverty and created a paradise. "Today's world is freer, richer, more peaceful and more prosperous than at any other time in our history." Making this possible, "businesspeople are the heroes" of his tale.

But in the southern corner of the world, a curse had befallen the land. "Argentina became a world power thanks to the embrace of the liberal model in 1860, but collapsed due to collectivism in the last 100 years," he asserted. He was referring to the establishment of education, healthcare, regulatory bodies and other public institutions after the Radical and then Peronist governments replaced the hegemonic regime of the agro-export oligarchy in 1916.

Milei claimed that these reforms are the result of the self-interest of a corrupt "caste" or the mistaken premises of reformist ideologues. But he failed to even utter the name of the real target of his crusade. The Argentine ruling class, as in

much of the world, implemented limited social reforms in response to the emergence of a powerful working class, which waged decades of militant battles inspired above all by the Russian Revolution of 1917.

These forced concessions had led to chaos, poverty, death and "opened the door to socialism," said Milei, portraying Argentina as the case study of why capitalism should be allowed to develop unfettered to achieve its supposed natural potential.

He then lambasted any restriction on corporations, declaring the enemy to be an amalgam of "communists, fascists, nazis, socialists, social-democrats, national socialists, Christian Democrats, Keynesians, neo-Keynesians, progressives, populists, nationalists or globalists." He stressed: "In substance, there are no differences." In other words, all should be dealt with as an existential threat, responsible for having "killed more than 100 million human beings."

He highlighted the threat that "regulating monopolies, destroying profits, and destroying increasing returns would automatically destroy economic growth."

This was a veiled reference to a report by Oxfam that had cast a shadow over the forum by documenting the stranglehold over the world economy by a tiny group of oligarchs and financial groups. The report points to record profits while 5 billion people are worse off than before the pandemic, and 800 million are losing to inflation the equivalent of almost a month of wages per year, among other findings.

"To conclude, I would like to leave a message to all entrepreneurs," concluded Milei. "Do not back down against the political caste or the parasites that live off the state."

Milei's euphoric reception at Davos and from most of the corporate media points to a significant shift.

A thunderous applause followed his speech. *Barron's* writes, "some in the audience gathered to shake his hand and take pictures." A reporter for the German outlet DW said, "I have never seen a reception like the one I saw here for Javier Milei from the attendees of this World Economic Forum." The *Wall Street Journal* published his speech under the title "Argentina's Milei Gives the Davos Crowd a Spine Transplant."

The *Financial Times* found broad enthusiasm for Milei's

presence, and cited Daniel Pinto, JP Morgan president. Milei “may be creating a new beginning for the country,” Pinto said, but warned that his plans “require the population to be willing to go through the pain of [austerity].”

Bloomberg columnist Juan Pablo Spinetto recalled that even Donald Trump had made a token mention of building “the most inclusive economy ever to exist,” in his 2020 Davos speech, which “Milei would probably deem a form of socialism.”

Such a prominent global platform and glowing reception has not been provided by the ruling class for an openly fascist manifesto since the 1930s.

Highlighting this shift in the attitudes of the ruling class, last year’s Latin American guests were the pseudo-left Colombian President Gustavo Petro and two ministers from the administration of Brazil’s “left” nationalist president, Lula da Silva, who also made hypocritical mentions of social equality and the protection of the environment.

Placed in the global and Argentine political contexts, the message “do not back down” clearly translates into a call for all-out war against working class opposition to the policies of war, genocide, recolonization and mass inequality.

Milei is among the staunchest cheerleaders of the US-Zionist onslaught in Gaza, which has triggered mass protests globally. The International Court of Justice heard a case last week that demonstrated with devastating detail that this constitutes a genocide.

While attempting to come off as a conquering hero in Davos, Milei kept quiet about what is happening in Argentina because it belies his “libertarian” claim that he sees the “state” as the enemy. Moreover, he has yet to implement the bulk of his plan because of the emerging social explosion it is provoking.

When Milei took power last month, nearly half of Argentina’s 47 million people were already poor, hunger was widespread, and inflation was nearing 200 percent. The G20 economy, moreover, had sunk into a recession.

As soon as he took office, Milei issued autocratic decrees to further destroy buying power through a massive devaluation of the peso, while giving a free hand to corporations and the government to raise prices and refuse to negotiate wage increases. Thousands have been laid off, particularly in the public sector, after ministries were cut in half and funds to provinces were ended. The government is taking steps to end all social assistance for over 160,000 households. Milei has boasted that public spending fell 30 percent in just 30 days. Significantly, he has not cut any taxes and is moving to raise taxes on middle-class incomes.

He has outlawed strike picket lines and roadblocks, and introduced an omnibus bill which demands powers to declare a “state of public emergency” for two to four years and rule as a dictator.

Vice President Victoria Villarruel, who made her debut as head of state in Milei’s absence, forged a career justifying the crimes carried out by Argentina’s fascist-military dictatorship

(1976-1983), including meeting repeatedly with late dictator Jorge Videla in jail. A recent feature piece on her in the *Financial Times* already raises the prospect of a presidential run, concluding, “She is ready... for anything.”

National demonstrations already took place on December 20 and 27, while a national protest strike has been called for January 24, but these are merely the attempts of the union bureaucracy and its pseudo-left apologists to contain social anger. Spontaneous marches, handmade signs with slogans like “Down with the *Military* Junta!” and *cacerolazos*—beating pots and pans—are seen almost daily, amid reports of rank-and-file assemblies at workplaces and campuses organized on social media. Reporters are frequently pressing Milei officials as to what their response will be to imminent plant occupations and indefinite strikes.

In this context, “do not back down” means employing the methods of a fascist police state.

Seeing this program as necessary to attract investments amid a deepening crisis of global capitalism and to protect its own profits, the Argentine financial-corporate oligarchy has lined up behind this program. Initially, the richest Argentinian, Marcos Galperin (\$6.2 billion), owner of e-commerce firm Mercado Libre, and the powerful Italian-Argentine multinational Techint Group, owned by Paolo and Gianfelice Rocca (\$3.9 billion), had endorsed and financed Milei. Today, most of the “Red Circle”—the elite around the main Argentine Business Association (AEA)—and their media has moved from endorsing the Peronist presidential candidate Sergio Massa to expressing support for the Milei administration.

The embrace of the fascist “loco” Milei in Davos and by the ruling elite more broadly confirms the analysis made by the *World Socialist Web Site* in its New Year’s statement that the accumulation of personal wealth and economic power by a tiny group of conglomerates was “sucking the oxygen out of democracy all over the world.” The statement concludes: “To claim that democratic forms of rule can be defended outside of a frontal assault on the wealth of the ruling elite and its domination over the economy is the height of political and intellectual charlatanry.”



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