

More than a million workers demonstrate during general strike against Milei in Argentina

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26 January 2024

The Confederation of Argentine Workers (CGT), the main trade union in Argentina, convoked the first general strike since 2019 on Wednesday, in an attempt to contain mass social anger over the “shock therapy” measures implemented by fascistic President Javier Milei.

In only a few weeks, the Milei administration has massively devalued the currency, imposed an executive decree with more than 300 policies and introduced an omnibus bill with more than 600 articles, including dictatorial powers under a “state of emergency” that would allow a ban on gatherings of three or more people, punishable with up to six years in prison.

As outlined during a fascist rant applauded at the World Economic Forum last week, Milei wishes to set a precedent for the entire world in turning the clock back to before 1916, when plantation and cattle owners ruled like aristocrats in Buenos Aires and the imperialist interests that controlled banks, railroads and commerce were “free” to run society at their whim.

Beginning at noon, about 5 million workers struck, shutting down public transportation, gas stations, clinics, offices, banks, some factories and other workplaces across the country. (Schools are on summer break.)

Demonstrators then flooded Congress square and the adjoining Avenida de Mayo in Buenos Aires, while tens of thousands rallied in Rosario, Córdoba, Corrientes, Mendoza, Tucumán, Mar del Plata, Paraná, Ushuaia, and Salta—cities where Milei won millions of votes.

The CGT estimates that 600,000 marched in Buenos Aires—far surpassing expectations of 100,000—and 1.5 million in total across Argentina.

The Minister of Security Patricia Bullrich tweeted nervously, “No strike can stop us. No threat can intimidate us,” after claiming absurdly that there were no more than 40,000 people in Buenos Aires.

Despite major contingents of police and gendarmes who tried to provoke the crowd, they were overwhelmed and failed at implementing the new “anti-protest protocol” that bans blocking roads.

Workers and youth mocked Bullrich and denounced the Milei “dictatorship.” A teacher said to C5N, “Above all, I am here because I can’t afford anything. My salary has been devalued by almost 50 percent.”

A public healthcare employee from Moreno said, “I am against the wage freeze; the reduction of the government. I work providing medical supplies, such as ostomy bags, medicines and so on, and we are running out of purchases of things that people depend on.”

Thousands of public employees have been laid off. The prices of gas, public transportation and medicines have doubled; meat is unaffordable; and the price of a gas container for cooking jumped from \$5.34 to \$16.64. Some economists already expect 400 percent inflation this year. Hunger, illness and misery are deepening sharply, and nearly half of the population already lived in poverty when Milei took power. Dozens of state-owned firms are slated for privatization.

As signaled too by the widespread demand for an indefinite general strike “until Milei falls,” a pre-revolutionary crisis is developing.

But the massive will to fight and brave challenge to the police repression contrasted palpably with the passivity and treacherousness of the union leadership, which is controlled by Peronism, the bourgeois nationalist movement founded by Juan Domingo Perón, who ruled in 1946-1955 and 1973-74.

The CGT and the other Peronist and pseudo-left union bureaucracies are following the same script that they have used for decades. They directed their appeals to Congress, governors and the courts and limited the strike to only 12

hours to affect the bourgeoisie as little as possible. Every attempt was made at covering up the capitalist character of the state and the Peronist party and their objective hostility to the working class.

Speaking from the stage, Pablo Moyano, who has led the Trucker's Union for decades with his father, declared, "A Peronist cannot vote for this." Among other slogans, he yelled, "You cannot betray Peronism;" "The Fatherland cannot be sold."

The fact is that the Peronist leadership has voted for and enforced countless attacks on workers. Milei has said often that "Argentina's best president was Carlos Menem," the Peronist who launched a wave of privatizations and social cuts during the 1990s. The CGT, in fact, used the same type of short Hollywood strikes and nationalist demagoguery during the mass uprising against the Raul Alfonsín administration to channel opposition behind the election of Menem. Today, Milei owes his election to overwhelming popular anger over Peronism's pro-austerity and pro-imperialist record.

Most fundamentally, the emerging mass upsurge against Milei is taking place as part of a global movement of the working class against fascism, war, austerity and social inequality.

Millions have protested in recent months globally against the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza by the US-backed Israeli regime of Benjamin Netanyahu. Just last weekend, over one million people demonstrated across Germany against the fascist Alternative for Germany and its planned attacks on refugees, while farmers in Germany and France are carrying out large protests against EU austerity.

This context poses immediately the question of making Argentine workers conscious of the objective global character of their struggles and the need to organize independently of all nationalist politicians and bureaucracies, while carrying out a frontal assault on the root cause of dictatorship, war, fascism and austerity: the global capitalist system.

Meanwhile, the national reformist and anti-imperialist pretensions of Peronism have entirely collapsed creating extremely favorable conditions to carry out this struggle.

However, precisely because of this context, the pseudo-left groups of the middle class organized within or around the so-called Left and Workers Front (FIT-U) are doubling down on their efforts to block a movement independent of Peronism.

While using small rallies in solidarity with the general strike that were organized by their partners in several

cities internationally as a cover—mere photo-ops outside Argentine consular buildings devoid of any orientation to the working class—the Argentine pseudo-left FIT-U has advanced a thoroughly nationalist perspective in response to the emerging anti-Milei movement.

It was the parties in the FIT-U, which led numerous trade unions and locals, who built most aggressively for broad participation in the January 24 strike, but this was not to mobilize otherwise passive workers but to ensure that the already emerging upsurge remained under the control of the CGT. Their publications applauded the CGT for convoking the 12-hour strike and advanced slogans demanding that the same union bureaucracy expand the strike and present a "plan of struggle."

As explained by the publication of the Morenoite Socialist Workers Party (PTS), *La Izquierda Diario* on January 13, these weeks have seen "non-stop and spreading cacerolazos, assemblies in multiple cities, towns and municipalities ... hundreds of students in WhatsApp groups and online assemblies..."

Instead of encouraging this mass spontaneous movement to break free from the Peronist apparatus, the PTS—and other groups advancing similar formulations—called for intervening among all the "popular and neighborhood assemblies that are being formed" and get them to support the CGT strike. They called for "action committees" but only as a means of "creating volumes of forces to become stronger for each partial struggle and to *impose the united front on the union and social leaderships*. From there we will continue 'striking together'..." (Our emphasis)

The FIT-U's Pabloite and Morenoite predecessors became appendages of the Peronist movement from the early 1950s and helped disarm the working class politically ahead of the US-backed 1976 coup that installed a brutal fascist-military dictatorship whose legacy Milei defends today.

The pseudo-left's attempts to subordinate workers to Peronism has again paved the way for the far right, and their continued efforts to revive the corpse of Peronism will only facilitate the implementation of Milei's fascist program.



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