

President Milei rides tank in Argentine independence day parade

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On Tuesday July 9, Argentine President Javier Milei attended a military parade in Buenos Aires, Argentina marking the 208th anniversary of Argentina's independence from the Spanish monarchy in 1816. He had also attended the anniversary in Tucuman of the declaration of independence which was issued on the same day in 1816 in that northwestern Argentine city.

Both events were staged amid the Milei administration's escalating offensive against the working class. This has taken a more and more concrete form as the regime maps out Milei's version of a new "National Reorganization Process," the official name adopted by the military dictatorship which ruled Argentina following a CIA-backed coup in 1976 for its Nazi-inspired agenda.

Last week's military parade, was led by veterans of the 10-week Malvinas War that took place in April 1982, 42 years ago, and included a large banner in memory of the Belgrano Battleship, which was sunk by the British, sending over 300 sailors to their deaths.

The small group of aging veterans was followed by 7,000 active duty troops of the Argentine Armed Forces. At one point, as a group of tanks were rolling by, Milei and his vice president, Victoria Villareal, climbed onto one of them, having their pictures taken alongside a rifle that seemed to point at the crowd of spectators. They rode for about 100 feet.

According to the Buenos Aires daily *Clarín*, the tank in question was one of five recently modernized by the Argentine Army, assisted by Elbit Systems, an Israeli firm. The tank in which Milei and Villareal rode has been equipped with state-of-the-art digital and electronic controls that increase speed and efficiency in combat.

In April, the Milei administration arranged to buy 24 F-16 US-made fighter jets from Denmark to "modernize" the Argentine Air Force. There are also plans to buy US made Lockheed P-3 Orion airplanes as well as Navy vessels.

These upgrades take place in the context of the creation of a naval base (in partnership with the US Navy) and an infantry training center in southern Argentina, along the Beagle Channel. In 1978, Argentine and Chile nearly went to war over the islands in this channel. Milei has also renewed interest in territory claimed by Argentina, Chile and the UK on the Antarctic continent.

In January, Milei presided over a restructuring of the armed forces command, retiring 22 generals and creating a "unified logistic command" in which the military would play a direct role internally, as part of the country's repressive apparatus, not just combatting drug trafficking and alleged terrorist attacks, but patrolling borders and repressing workers and students.

These changes, together with the upgrading of military equipment are considered essential as part of the government's declared aim of becoming a "global partner" of the US-led NATO alliance.

In truth, the entire parade, including both the nostalgic references to the Malvinas War and the provocative tank ride, was a manifestation of, and goes hand-in-hand with, Milei's and Villareal's nationalism and militarism, including their support for the bloody dictatorship that ruled the country between March 24, 1976 and December 1983.

This year on March 24, Argentina's Day of Truth and Justice, the Milei administration issued a video with claims that the military junta led by Gen. Jorge Videla had taken power as an unfortunate but necessary reaction to the crimes of subversive groups, such as the Montoneros and the ERP. It also made the unsubstantiated claim that the number of workers and youth disappeared by the junta, tortured, and, in many cases, thrown out of airplanes to their deaths, was far less than 30,000 (as is widely believed), but closer to 4,000 "subversive monsters." The video directs its fire against the Nestor Kirchner government for prosecuting the dictator Videla

and other leaders of the dirty war of repression and murder.

Ten hours ahead of the military parade, at dawn on July 9, in the historic city of Tucuman, Milei assembled provincial governors and political leaders for the signing of a 10-point social contract meant to transform Argentina's economic and political institutions along neo-liberal lines. The meeting took place in the same hall where in 1816, the nation had declared independence from the Spanish crown.

The document, known as the May Pact, was signed by 18 governors (out of 23), the mayor of the city of Buenos Aires, and by Milei himself. None of the signers, except for Milei, belong to Milei's political party. No matter, Peronists, Radicals and members of other right-wing bourgeois parties joined in endorsing the Pact.

Its ten points include: the sanctity of private property; slashing public spending; tax and tariff reforms "to simplify the lives of all Argentines" and promote trade; reduction in government subsidies to the provinces; "modern" labor and pension reforms; and unrestricted international trade to make Argentina a "player in the world market" once again. At the request of some of the governors, an additional point was added that ensures and "a useful and modern" educational system for all primary and secondary schools.

To manage the agreement's implementation, Milei's administration will create a May Pact Commission with representatives from the provinces, the trade unions, and the private sector.

In a recent speech, Milei called on Argentines, in the name of "liberty," to put aside partisan differences and work together to establish a new economic order. The events of July 9 exposed the lie behind this unity appeal. As was the case with the 1976 military tyrants, Milei's version of their National Reorganization Process aims to concretize, under the false flag of liberty, a repressive corporate dictatorship over the working class.



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