

Argentina's labor bill vote and tire factory shutdown expose pseudo-left unionism

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Argentina's Senate gave final approval Friday to fascist President Javier Milei's "Labor Modernization" bill, a sweeping counterrevolutionary measure slashing severance pay, enabling mass layoffs and dismantling basic labor protections.

The legislation effectively drives workers' rights back by over a century amid a wave of strikes and protests that exposed the betrayals of the union bureaucracy and pseudo-left groups.

The bill, debated alongside a reactionary Juvenile Penal Regime lowering the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 14, passed easily after the Senate had already endorsed a prior version.

Milei's government only dropped a pension cuts article to secure Chamber of Deputies approval, confirming the measure's core aim: to arm employers with "flexibility" in hiring, firing and bargaining as the ruling class accelerates hundreds of thousands of job cuts to restructure the economy for resource extraction and deindustrialization.

While the Argentine Workers Centrals (CTAs) called a 36-hour strike and mobilizations in Buenos Aires ahead of the vote, the larger General Confederation of Workers (CGT) refused to even call a Friday protest, opting instead for a Monday march in conjunction with the filing of a lawsuit against the bill. The decision echoes its impotent 24-hour national strike during the bill's lower house passage last Thursday.

Polls show that a clear majority of Argentinians oppose the bill, and only 13 percent believe it will benefit workers (Analogías).

The shutdown and mass layoffs at the tire factory FATE stand at the center of the ruling class's escalating offensive against jobs and working conditions across Argentina, making resistance to the tire plant's shutdown a crucial struggle not only for Argentine workers but for the international working class as a whole.

Friday morning, FATE-workers led a near-total blockade of the Panamericana highway's Tigre ramp, accompanied by pseudo-left groups. The protest came under heavy repression by the police and Gendarmerie, leading to four arrests. FATE, owned by billionaire Madanes Quintanilla (also of Aluar and Futaleufú), employs nearly 1,000 workers and supports

thousands more in a key industrial hub.

SUTNA, the plant's pseudo-left-led union tied to the Workers Party (Partido Obrero, PO), held shift assemblies where workers demanded reopening from provincial, national and corporate authorities. Union head Alejandro Crespo declared to the media: "We, the workers, have confirmed in assembly that our demand is for the plant to be put back into operation... We clearly demand a proposal for job guarantees. We ask the provincial government, the national government, the company, and the Madanes Quintanilla holding company... to put forward a plan for guaranteed jobs for the 1,000 families."

Crespo appealed directly to the "unions and trade union federations, the CGT and the CTA... let's organize a big demonstration... in front of the Labor Secretariat headquarters on Alem Street, to show that we are serious about our demands."

Prensa Obrera, the PO's publication, hailed FATE as "the beacon" guiding the struggle of the Argentine working class against Milei's labor reforms and mass layoffs. The PO blames high interest rates cheapening the dollar and tariff cuts favoring Chinese imports. Insisting that the SUTNA "method" must be replicated everywhere, PO leader Gabriel Solano speculated that Madanes would reopen "when market conditions change," ignoring the transnational logic of capital fluidly shifting investments globally.

Similar to other pseudo-left groups, Política Obrera, an expelled faction of the PO, echoed this and simply added calls for "massive rotating picket lines" to defend the plant occupation.

This is the "method" of SUTNA and the pseudo-left: subordinate militant actions to a nationalist strategy oriented to the capitalist state and pro-capitalist union bureaucracy. This approach serves only to promote futile appeals to the Peronist opposition parties that granted Milei quorum for the labor bill's passage.

The bureaucracy secured its privileges, as Milei removed clauses ending automatic dues checkoff and slashing union health plan funding. If anything, the bill's virtual ban on strikes in "essential" sectors now hands the union apparatus another pretext to suppress action.

Milei's bill facilitates the ruling class purge of "unprofitable" industry as part of a broader global economic reshuffling that is triggering mass layoffs worldwide, driving down labor costs to boost corporate profits amid slowing growth, new technologies and trade wars.

In Argentina, this takes the form of a shift toward resource extraction like the exploitation of Vaca Muerta shale gas and lithium mining, abandoning labor-intensive manufacturing; prime examples include FATE's closure, Córdoba's IBF shutdown in December, and warnings from Neuman's owner that Pirelli and Bridgestone plants will follow unless they pivot to imports.

The Trump administration and IMF, acting as enforcers for Wall Street, have poured billions into Milei's deregulation and austerity program to guarantee returns for US banks and hedge funds, energy giants and agribusiness.

Argentine tire workers and others now face not just the local oligarchy but the full wrath of American imperialism, making all the more indispensable an internationalist strategy uniting workers across borders to halt layoffs, defend jobs and expropriate the transnationals.

Milei is compounding these social attacks by laying the groundwork for outright fascist dictatorship, mirroring Trump's trajectory in the United States. This includes the Juvenile Penal Regime slashing the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 14 to terrorize politically radicalizing working-class youth, and his January 2 executive order empowering intelligence agencies to conduct warrantless arrests, signaling a police-state terror offensive against mounting working-class resistance.

Workers' response be cannot nationalist appeals to the local state or bureaucracy antagonizing workers abroad, but must advance internationalism: Argentine tire workers uniting with their US, Chinese and global counterparts against the transnationals. However, Peronism, the PO and other forces in the so-called Left and Workers Front United (FIT-U) repeat history, channeling revolt behind bourgeois politics.

Historical betrayals pave the road to dictatorship

The PO "method" echoes that employed during the 1960s-1970s upsurge, when FIT-U precursors subordinated revolutionary actions—most notably, the *Cordobazo*—to the same Peronist union bureaucracy and government which formed fascist squads to murder militant workers. This set the stage for the 1976-1983 dictatorship.

The *Rodrigazo* of 1975—a radical IMF-style austerity shock imposed by Economy Minister Celestino Rodrigo under the Isabel Perón administration, featuring a 100 percent peso devaluation, massive hikes in oil, utility and food prices, wage freezes and an economic opening to multinational corporations—exposes Peronism's counterrevolutionary past. Peronism has long been the preferred instrument of rule for the ruling class, not a potential alternative that can be pressured to defend workers' interests.

Workers' massive July general strike in 1975 defeated this predecessor to today's shock therapy, toppling Social Welfare minister José López Rega, leader of the fascist Triple A (Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance) death squads, and forcing Rodrigo's resignation. Early 1976 strikes escalated further, producing independent workers' councils that linked factory committees across industrial zones and shattered Peronist bureaucratic control over the class struggle. This was the true driver of the 1976 coup, as the bourgeoisie's traditional mechanisms of political domination collapsed and the military reemerged as its final recourse.

Lacking a revolutionary leadership, workers faced dual betrayals from Peronism and the predecessors of today's pseudo-left. Nahuel Moreno's Socialist Workers Party (PST), which had already joined the 1974 "Bloc of 8" electoral alliance with capitalist parties to prop up Perón's regime against coup threats, adapted to the *Rodrigazo* by cynically endorsing short general strikes only to channel the revolt back into negotiations with the Peronist state and IMF accommodations.

One pseudo-left faction pursued middle-class adventurist guerrillaism, handing the regime pretexts for repression; the other openly backed "institutionalization" under Isabel Perón's disintegrating government. By February 1975, even before the *Rodrigazo* detonated, Isabel Perón had secretly authorized military "neutralization" of "subversives," paving the way for the dictatorship's reign of terror.

Today's pseudo-left apologies for the Peronist/unions can only prepare new defeats. Argentine workers require independent rank-and-file committees, rejecting all bourgeois parties, linking with global struggles against austerity, layoffs and fascism. The International Committee of the Fourth International and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees offer the revolutionary program and internationalist strategy to defeat Milei's offensive and build toward socialist revolution.



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