

Milei exploits Malvinas to build up Argentina's repressive apparatus

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On September 17, the fascistic government of President Javier Milei sent Argentina's Congress a "National Sovereignty Defense Law" and asked lawmakers to give it "maximum priority." The bill followed a September 3 national broadcast in which Milei declared that the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands, occupied by Britain since 1833, faced "a clear and urgent danger" from offshore oil drilling.

He called on the entire political establishment to "put our weapons aside and show a united front before the world," since "Malvinas is one of those causes that stand above any political difference."

The bill's provisions on the islands raise fines and prison terms for companies exploiting resources in the South Atlantic without Argentine authorization. The rest of it is aimed at domestic repression. It creates a National Security Council, modeled on Washington's, chaired by Milei and made up of the ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Economy and the head of the Secretariat of State Intelligence (SIDE), with powers to impose "a regime of urgent measures." It rewrites the National Defense Law to cover "state and non-state" threats, "kinetic or non-kinetic," and assigns the Armed Forces the protection of "critical infrastructure." It frees the SIDE from judicial oversight and creates a terrorism registry to which anyone can be added based on "reasonable grounds of suspicion."

Days after the broadcast, an emergency decree handed more than 217 billion pesos (US\$142.3 million) to the Armed Forces and 30.5 billion (US\$20 million) to intelligence while cutting health, housing and education.

The British occupation of the Malvinas is a real expression of the oppression of Argentina by imperialism, though far from the most significant one next to the pillaging of the country by the IMF, finance capital and the transnational corporations.

Milei has moved to reshape the country's historically industrialized economy and change its position in the world division of labor according to the demands of imperialist finance capital in favor of looting the treasury, financial speculation, resource extraction and agribusiness. Milei has erased about a third of the public budget and overseen the destruction of 354,000 jobs and tens of thousands of companies as part of this transformation, with nearly a third of the population now living below the official poverty line.

Milei is using a genuine historic grievance to set up the political apparatus necessary to suppress a working class that has waged four general strikes and continue this economic transformation—a program of deregulation and liberalization attempted by the military dictatorship as it launched the Malvinas war—and to tie Argentina to Washington's military plans in the South Atlantic.

Beyond mild tactical differences, the Peronists have overwhelmingly closed ranks behind the "national cause" of the Malvinas. The pseudo-left, led by the Morenoite Socialist Workers Party (Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas, PTS) and the Partido Obrero (PO) have denounced both, the repressive content of the Malvinas bill and the hypocrisy of the Peronists. But these parties answer with a nationalist

program themselves, one that never so much as mentions the only force capable of defeating imperialism: the unity of Argentine and Latin American workers with their class brothers in the United States and Britain.

The US record on the Malvinas

On April 2, 1982, the military junta of General Leopoldo Galtieri, facing economic collapse and mass protests, occupied the islands to rally the population behind the dictatorship. The Reagan administration, after a brief show of mediation, backed Britain with intelligence, fuel and missiles. On May 2, the Thatcher government sank the cruiser *General Belgrano* outside its own declared exclusion zone as the ship sailed away, killing 323 Argentine sailors. The war killed 649 Argentine and 255 British servicemen and three islanders. Argentina's surrender on June 14 brought down the junta and handed Thatcher political capital for her offensive against the British working class.

Washington's position today is again determined solely by the predatory interests of US imperialism. At the end of August, Trump said he was reviewing US neutrality on the islands ("I always review every position"), amid reports that he could challenge British sovereignty unless London raised military spending, and complained that Britain had "not been there to help me" against Iran. On September 22, he met British Prime Minister Andy Burnham, assured him Washington was "with you all the way" and said nothing as Burnham vowed to "stand firm" on the Falklands.

As Trump moves to seize control of Greenland, Venezuela's oil and the Panama Canal, Washington undoubtedly has its eyes on the Sea Lion oil field off the Malvinas. After approval by the Falkland Islands Department of Mineral Resources (in what London insisted was in keeping with islanders' "right of self-determination") Israel's Navitas Petroleum and Britain's Rockhopper Exploration took the final investment decisions to proceed with development in December 2025. La Política Online reported on September 3 that officers in the Armed Forces suspect the naval base Milei has promised for Tierra del Fuego is meant for the Pentagon to oversee the Malvinas and the South Atlantic.

The Peronists and "national unity"

The Peronist opposition answered Milei's call. Juan Grabois, a self-described "left" Peronist, greeted the broadcast: "Even if it's the worst government in the world, everything done against the English invader is

good.” Governor Axel Kicillof of Buenos Aires, the likely Peronist presidential candidate, told *El Observador* on September 26 that it was “risky to tie the Argentine position and the historical claims to this conjuncture,” but insisted that “the Malvinas cause, for those of us who defend it, is a permanent policy that must be sustained.” In the same interview, given during a trip to meet New York investors and bondholders, he praised Trump’s drive to “reindustrialize the United States” as “a novelty” and hailed New York’s Mayor Zohran Mamdani, saying the US “Democratic Socialist’s” measures on the cost of living “are the ones we are taking in the province.” Mamdani had hosted Trump at Gracie Mansion on September 21, their third meeting.

The Morenoites’ “Latin American” nationalism

The PTS, the leading party in the Left and Workers Front-Unity (FIT-U), wrote on Milei’s defense bill in *La Izquierda Diario* on September 28. Its chief editor, Eduardo Castilla, described the law as follows: “a national cause felt by the entire Argentine people becomes an instrument to reinforce internal repression,” fulfilling “the eternal dream of the right: allowing the Armed Forces to act inside the country.” He also listed Peronism’s ties to Washington, down to former President Cristina Kirchner receiving US Southern Command chief Laura Richardson “with smiles.”

What does the PTS propose instead? A September 27 article by Ezequiel Silva explains:

The Malvinas question and that of the South Atlantic cannot be approached as an exclusively Argentine claim. On the contrary, it is a question that involves all of Latin America and that must be inscribed in an anti-imperialist struggle on a continental scale ... Defending the Argentine right to recover the islands implies linking this struggle with the rejection of all imperialist intervention in Latin America, as occurs in the cases of Venezuela and Cuba. ... This perspective requires thinking about the Malvinas question within the framework of a strategy of Latin American socialist unity.

The workers of the imperialist centers most directly involved, the United States and Britain, are entirely absent from this political equation. The collection of bourgeois states competing for investment and Washington’s favor across Latin America stands in for the international working class.

The PTS’s concrete program, as *La Izquierda Diario* put it in March, is the “expropriation of imperialist companies, in particular those of British origin.” The Partido Obrero promotes exerting “real pressure,” which “requires, at a minimum, affecting British interests in Argentina.” While workers cannot dismiss boycotts and measures against British companies, most fundamentally neither party makes any appeal to British workers, who face the same austerity and war budgets from their own government.

The PTS justifies this orientation with its version of 1982. In March, *La Izquierda Diario* wrote that “the correct position in the Malvinas War, once imperialist aggression was unleashed, was to place oneself militarily in the camp of the oppressed nation but in an independent manner.” This is a defense of the line of its predecessor Nahuel Moreno, who had broken with the International Committee of the Fourth International in 1963, and whose party declared itself in the “same military camp” as Galtieri and called on workers to collect clothes, food and letters for the front. The PTS, says Moreno, “intervened generally in a correct fashion.” In other

words, historically, its talk of “independent” methods is merely empty rhetoric.

During the war, as the ICFI explained:

To sum up, the tasks of Trotskyists in Britain was to unconditionally defend the right of Argentina to self-determination and work at all times for the defeat of the British government and its military forces. In Argentina, Trotskyists had to defend national self-determination with their own, proletarian, methods, upholding at all times the political independence of the working class and the banner of revolutionary internationalism.

As Trotsky wrote in the *Transitional Program*, in supporting a colonial country the proletariat “does not in the slightest degree solidarize” with its bourgeois government and “maintains full political independence.” The Morenoites, on the contrary, choose the military camp of the bourgeoisie, and discard everything that gives the defense of the oppressed nation a working-class content.

A more pinkish tide

The PTS’s answer to the crisis of Argentine capitalism is its campaign for “committees for a party of the new working class.” Launching it on May Day, its leader Myriam Bregman announced that its program would be “the program of the Left Front,” a platform with no defined socialist content. Moreno carried out the same operation in the 1980s with the Movement to Socialism (MAS), which proposed a broad “Workers Party” on the model of Lula’s Workers Party (PT) in Brazil. What is on offer is a more “revolutionary” and more Latin Americanist version of the nationalist and reformist parties of the “pink tide,” from Lula to the Chavistas.

This perspective rests on a definite assessment of the world situation. In April, *La Izquierda Diario* declared that “we are not facing a Third World War” and that “today we are not in the presence of revolutions.” If the objective crisis of capitalism is not driving toward world war and fascism, and no revolution is on the agenda, then it can be pressured into reforming itself, and the capitalist nation-state remains the natural arena of struggle.

The same outlook governs the Morenoites’ work in the United States. Their US section, *Left Voice*, is oriented to pressuring the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), a faction of the Democratic Party. Workers of the United States appear in the Morenoites’ politics only as a passive instrument for pressuring the Democratic Party and union bureaucracy, never as the allies of Argentine and Latin American workers against a common enemy.

The practical consequences can be seen at the Fate tire plant in Buenos Aires province, occupied since February against the layoff of 920 workers. The PO-led tire workers union SUTNA, which the PTS hails as a “beacon,” has channeled the occupation into appeals to Kicillof and the provincial legislature. When an appeals court in San Isidro ordered the occupation evicted this month, the union’s answer was to appeal to the courts and, once again, to Kicillof, who has justified the closure.

The way forward

Trotsky wrote in 1934 that “the working class is not indifferent to its nation. On the contrary, it is just because history places the fate of the nation into its hands that the working class refuses to entrust the work of national freedom and independence to imperialism.” It cannot entrust it to Milei, to the Peronists or to any section of the Argentine bourgeoisie either.

The working class opposes the British occupation of the Malvinas and every imperialist base in the South Atlantic, including the one Washington may be preparing in Ushuaia. But the imperialist oppression of Argentina and Latin America as a whole can be ended only through the independent mobilization of the working class as part of the world socialist revolution. That requires the unity of Argentine and Latin American workers with workers in the United States and Britain, who are bound to them through global chains of production and exploited by the same financial oligarchy. The task is to build rank-and-file committees linked in the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and an Argentine section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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