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Argentina

Argentina: opposition to Milei revives

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After many months without a significant opposition movement to the government of President Javier Milei on the streets of Argentina, the 36-hour cross-industry strike of 9-10 April and the social reality of the country have brought the movement back to life.

Since the CGT, Argentina's main trade union federation, abandoned its strategy of confrontation through strikes - the last one dating back to May 2024 - Milei's anti-social, fascist policies had been able to unfold without any major backlash. Pensioners faced with increasingly inhumane living conditions met every Wednesday, but seemed isolated.

Against repression

The repression ordered by the minister for national security Patricia Bullrich to attack the pensioners' rally on 12 March was the last straw. The anger linked to the massive deterioration in the material living conditions of a majority of the population has been reawakened. The trade unions, and more particularly the CGT, previously committed to a negotiating strategy that looked more like a humiliation session, called for a general strike. From then on, mobilization rose to a crescendo: on 19 March, the weekly gathering of pensioners found increasing support; on 24 March, the mobilization in memory of the dictatorship was strong; on 9 April, the eve of the strike, 50,000 people gathered in the central square of Buenos Aires, along with almost all the progressive political forces and trade union and social organizations of the capital.

The strike, our best weapon

By early evening, the initial feedback seemed to indicate that the strike was going to be a powerful one. It was the biggest since Milei came to power. Most of the key professional sectors took part in the strike. In the air transport sector, over 300 flights were cancelled, aeronautical factories were at a standstill for 36 hours, port services were interrupted, trains stopped running, automotive and steel companies were paralyzed, the oil sector virtually ceased to function, and civil servants and teachers, the Milei administration's preferred targets, swelled the ranks of strikers. The example of the Vaca Muerta oil workers acted as a symbol: in this extractivist and ecocidal project, which Milei brandishes as the standard of tomorrow's Argentina, the 15,000 employees gathered in an assembly voted unanimously to strike.

First political effect: Bullrich and her repressive protocol, opposing "the union caste that threatens the Republic" on 9 April, did not dare resort to force. The second political effect was that the estimated losses to employers from the two-day strike were between \$200 and \$880 million. Last but not least, Argentina's workers reminded the far-right government that their resistance was far from over.

The Left still divided

The outlook for the opposition to Milei remains unclear. The strike also served as a reminder of the fragmentation of Argentine workers: the broad masses of informal workers, the most precarious and exploited, were barely represented. Similarly, the CGT bureaucracy's agenda is too heterogeneous to guarantee a unifying horizon:

between the preservation of its “conquests” (and land assets), failed negotiations, and some of its federations opting for subordination to the regime, the voices within it defending a perspective of struggle are far from hegemonic. Left-wing Peronism, for its part, seems bogged down in deplorable internal conflicts, while the far left remains too fragmented and sectarian to have any significant influence.

Nevertheless, the social misery generated by Milei's policies continues to deepen. Food, transport and rent prices continue to rise, and the recent IMF mega-loan, which will do nothing to benefit the population, will only increase the anger.

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