

# **The 2018 G20 in Buenos Aires**

**Background Materials and Logbook**

CrimethInc.

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On November 30 and December 1, the 2018 G20 summit will bring together the rulers of the 20 most powerful nations for a meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina to strategize about how to maintain world domination. Following the courageous disruption and mass unrest during last year's G20 summit in Hamburg, the whole world is watching to see what will happen in Buenos Aires. Organizers have planned a global week of action expressing opposition to the concentration of power in the hands of politicians and capitalists and conveying a vision of a more egalitarian world. Our international correspondents in Buenos Aires will be reporting to us daily. Below, you can read the reports from the last few days before the mobilization and review our coverage of a decade and a half of previous resistance to G8 and G20 summits.

## **Logbook G20**

We will be publishing a kind of logbook covering the 2018 G20 summit in Buenos Aires and the demonstrations taking place against it. The function of a logbook is to record all essential events concerning the ship—including events on board, but also everything that could affect the ship from outside and observations during the voyage or when going ashore. Here, we will try to present the essential context of the 2018 G20 and give an impression of the general city events.

## **Prehistory and General Conditions**

Buenos Aires was already chosen as the venue for 2018 before the 2017 G20 summit took place in Hamburg. This metropolis of 14 million people has been a protest stronghold in Latin America for a long time. This is even truer now, as a result of the far-reaching social cuts introduced by the neoliberal policies of President Macri's government. The background to this is a currency crisis and a loan imposed by the IMF as the "only possible antidote." According to official figures, the repayment and interest burden alone will account for approximately 25% of the state budget for many years to come. (In Germany, by contrast, a total of 6% is currently spent as "debt service" in the state budget.) The IMF is an integral part of the G20; consequently, the protests against the summit address the IMF, social questions, and the future viability of society.

The protest alliance "No al G20" is broad-based: it involves numerous trade unions, environmental associations, human rights groups, ATTAC, and large sections of the women's movement and left-wing organizations. This mobilization is international, especially involving people from neighboring countries. An action week is planned before the summit, as well as a large-scale demonstration on Friday, November 30, the first day of the two-day summit.

The Argentine government has taken tremendous repressive measures. The deployment of 22,000 Argentine police officers has already been announced, and a further 5000 security forces from various countries are to supplement them. The government purchased discarded combat aircraft from France and new armored vehicles from China with optional MG armament on the roof. In addition, they bought an arsenal including fully 2 million rubber bullets, various surveillance equipment, and other police weaponry. The Argentine state is spending money on this while in the universities, the lights are going out in the evening due to unpaid electricity bills and pensioners have to tighten their belts three holes at a time.

November 30 has been legally declared a "holiday without work" for the entire city of Buenos Aires; the residents are encouraged to spend a long weekend in the countryside. In addition, for

the duration of the summit, public transport will be completely suspended in the city center, if not the entire city.

## **Wednesday, November 14**

### **Senate Waves IMF Program through; Protests before Parliament**

It was foreseeable. After the House of Representatives had already approved the draft of the IMF program by a narrow majority; the approval of the much more conservative Senate seemed to be certain. This time, however, the Macri government made every effort to secure the broadest possible approval. That is why they haggled until the end—especially aiming to gain the approval of at least a few Peronists and of representatives of the rural regions. Those in rural areas will be particularly affected by the program because, in addition to the social cuts, it will also cut funding previously earmarked for the poorer provinces. A few specific representatives negotiated special conditions for their regions and finally agreed to pass the controversial IMF budget package. The vote was 45 in favor, 24 against, while opinion polls showed almost exactly the opposite picture among the general population.

While the debate was taking place, a rally of between 3000 and 5000 demonstrators gathered in front of the parliament (“el Congreso”)—quite a small number for Buenos Aires and especially in view of the important reason. A few weeks before, during the vote of the Chamber of Deputies, there came many, many more people and fierce clashes broke out. The largest blocs at that time were young Trotskyists and a more leftist faction within the Peronists. But there was also a kind of “standing panel discussion,” the “Barrios de Pie” were involved, and also a few more militant groups. When a small group, mostly unmasked despite several cameras, began to pry up paving stones from the street with iron rods, a sturdy group came out of the Peronist block and took the rods away from them. The Trotskyists sealed off their bloc with a human chain and shortly thereafter pulled away to hold their own smaller demonstration.

Finally, about 80 fully-equipped police officers stormed out of their own fencing towards the Peronist block, grabbed a very young anarcho-punk demonstrator, and dragged him away to loud protests from the crowd, which they blocked off by forming a chain across a side street. According to the press, a second person was arrested as well.

Notably, after a comparatively short sprint, most of that riot police in full gear were gasping for air. Their protective equipment must be enormously heavy.

### **Ritualized Protests and Repression before the Congreso**

There is hardly a protest in Buenos Aires that does not end in front of the Parliament building—if it does not begin there. Accordingly, everything seems to be arranged: the roadblocks (2-meter-high connectable steel grids) are not transported away between demonstrations, but stored nearby and always rebuilt at the same intersections. At the adjacent main artery, this is indicated by installed signs reading “*Evitar zona Congreso—Corte total*” (“Avoid the congress zone—total blockage”). The standard barriers cover several hundred meters with numerous shops and an estimated 5000 residents. At the narrow checkpoints, the security guards wear suits; they probably already know many of the residents and regulate everything without helmets and truncheons on their belts. Often, everyday life plays out on three of the four sides of the ritualized barrier.

On the fourth side, however, in front of the main façade, demonstrations take place in front of the barrier on the large square, and clashes occur regularly. Behind the barriers, the police position their “Infanteria” (the usual term here), i.e., helmeted riot police, as well as water cannons and motorcycle units. If they think it’s necessary, they move to the spacious square in front of the parliament building, shoot tear gas and rubber bullets, clear the area, and beat and arrest people, often against embittered resistance.

## **Thursday, November 15**

### **Press Conference of the Protest Alliance “La Confluencia—Fuera G20 y FMI”**

This press conference took place at the Latin American human rights organization “Servicio Paz y Justicia.” The small hall was full to capacity—including, among others, the 1<sup>st</sup> German Television and the news agency Reuters. The podium is occupied by Beverly Keene, a spokeswoman of the alliance, and Nora Cortiñas, one of the best-known “Madres de la Plaza de Mayo.” Behind them stand other representatives of the alliance.

Beverly Keene briefly introduces the alliance and emphasizes its versatility and openness. It was not for nothing that it is called *La Confluencia*, i.e., a “confluence” of many different flows into a common river. She stresses that all meetings and preparations are open to the public and, in this context, criticizes the surveillance carried out by security forces. The danger does not come from the alliance, but rather from the premeditated state repression and from the G20 itself.

Then, succinctly but comprehensively, she sets forth the protesters’ concerns. The G20 leaders do not represent the interests of the people, as they claim to, especially not those of Latin America. Rather, their policies produce hunger, poverty, and destruction worldwide, especially in Argentina, where the IMF stipulations are currently aggravating the misery of millions of people. But this is only one part of an international system that no longer has any legitimacy. It is not for nothing that the G20 leaders have to hide behind an armada of security forces.

Then we hear about the events of the protest week, especially the “summit of alternatives” on November 28 and 29, which will take place on the square in front of the parliament building, and the mass demonstration on November 30, the first day of the summit. A trade union representative adds that several million demonstrators have already taken to the streets throughout Argentina against Macri—against the IMF program and thus also against the policy of the G20. Everywhere in the country, mobilizations are taking place; one may expect very, very many participants.

Next, we heard from Nora “Norita” Cortiñas with a short but touching speech. She vehemently called on people not to be intimidated and instead to take to the streets in droves. Her demand carries weight; she publicly opposed the military dictatorship at a time when participating in demonstrations could get you killed. Over 30,000 people were murdered—including Nora Cortiñas’s son.

### **Protest Alliance and Appeals**

The alliance involves nine international networks, 102 Argentine organizations, and eight from other countries. Among them are environmental associations (e.g., Friends of the Earth), several grassroots trade unions, organizations that are critical of capitalist globalization, left-wing

anti-imperialist groups, ATTAC (also from France and Spain), a Basque Antifascist organization, internationalist groups, various campesino organizations, student associations, women's organizations, human rights groups, associations for grassroots economy, and others. It does not involve the Peronist-dominated trade unions, but for example the "Movimiento Evita," who see themselves as "revolutionary Peronists." What is striking about the alliance and its external image is the large proportion of women in general and the specifically feminist component of the mobilization.

From the outset, the "Confluencia" has explicitly positioned itself as internationalist. This is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that generally, Argentinian politics from right to left are limited to a standard national framework. The call for mobilization was translated into five other languages, including English.

## **Friday, November 16**

### **An Explosion at the Cemetery; Raids and 14 Arrests**

Already on November 14, in the early evening, an explosion took place in the cemetery in the district of Recoleta, allegedly in direct proximity to the grave of Ramón Falcón, an infamous police chief who was assassinated by anarchists on November 14, 1909, precisely 109 years earlier. A woman was seriously injured in the explosion. A mother of two, she lost three fingers and was taken to hospital with severe facial and skull injuries; her companion was arrested directly. According to police, four more "homemade pipe bombs" were found at the grave.

Shortly thereafter, bodyguards arrested another man who allegedly threw a "highly developed incendiary bomb" that did not detonate under the parked car of the judge Claudio Bonadio. The federal judge had conducted various sensational corruption proceedings against former high-ranking Peronist officials and politicians, as well as sentencing two demonstrators to several months' imprisonment after riots in December 2017. The arrestee is alleged to have visited one of them once in prison.

The police and large sections of the press evaluate both "attempts" as part of a militant campaign in the context of the upcoming G20 summit and classify the three arrested as "violent anarchists." On this pretext, police carried out raids of several houses, including three left-wing cultural centers. The man arrested at the cemetery is alleged to have lived in one of them, which is alleged to be the "epicenter of the anarchist movement." The police stormed the long-occupied house with heavily armed special units and arrested ten more people. So-called crow's feet (cal-trops) were presented to the press as "bomb material." On the following day, another arrest took place.

In addition, two Lebanese brothers were arrested and accused of possessing numerous weapons. Both were accused of associating with Hezbollah and of planning an assassination during the G20. The whole thing became mixed up in the media, which used the excuse to portray a scenario of extreme danger. The press conference of the alliance "Confluencia" was pushed under the table and instead one media "fish story" chased after the next.

Bizarrely, the "donated" armored clearance vehicles from the Chinese to Argentina were delivered in a public ceremony. Security Minister Bullrich once again urged city dwellers to leave Buenos Aires already on the Thursday before the summit, because "...the situation in the city will become very complicated... if there is any violence, we will take immediate measures against and

stop it.” In the meantime, the German Foreign Office has also issued a corresponding safety warning.

## **Anarchism in Argentina**

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a very strong libertarian and anarcho-syndicalist movement in Argentina. For several decades, the FORA (Federación Obrera Regional Argentina) was the largest and most militant trade union in the country. After a long history of strikes, demonstrations, factory occupations, and bloody repression, the movement was largely crushed in the 1930s and 1940s.

Currently, the relatively small anarchist movement is closely linked to a subcultural context, similar to the anarchist movement in many parts of Europe. But anarchists also participate in major political mobilizations, such as those bringing attention to the kidnapping and murder of the activist Santiago Maldonado.

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## **Peronism, Counter-Summit Creativity, and the Schedule of Resistance**

In this second installment of our coverage of the 2018 G20 summit, our international correspondents report on the political and cultural events leading up to the summit. China has given Argentina a considerable amount of military equipment with which to brutalize and potentially mass-murder people in Buenos Aires if they interfere with the state agenda of totalitarian control during the G20 meetings. Meanwhile, organizers have announced the schedule for a week of resistance. The lines are drawn.

### **Saturday, November 17**

#### **Day of “Militant Peronism”**

This day marks the return of Juan Domingo Perón on November 17, 1972 after 17 years of exile in Franco’s Spain; the date is still celebrated annually by the Peronist movement in Argentina. Traditionally, there is a large rally with numerous speeches. This year, it took place in the stadium of a local football club. The motto is: *Unidos o Dominados*, “united or dominated.” The dominant theme is President Macri’s austerity budget package imposed by the IMF and his “necessary replacement—at the latest, by the 2019 elections.” Naturally, of course, by the Peronists.

But what is this “unity,” exactly? Some Peronists in the Senate voted for the budget package; they were called “traitors” at the rally. But also, the powerful Peronist trade union federation CGT is conducting a dialogue with a high-ranking IMF representative, while other parts of the Peronist movement support the protests and are also calling for a protest against the G20 summit. These call themselves “Peronismo popular”; they are left-oriented and still able to mobilize masses of people onto the streets. In addition, a large part of the *Porteños* (the urban residents of Buenos

Aires) feel connected to Peronism; in many cases, this loyalty has been passed down across multiple generations. This describes a considerable portion of modern and cosmopolitan urban society in Buenos Aires.

### **Between Nazi Exiles and Left-Wing Guerrillas**

What most Perón fans don't know—or have suppressed in their memories—is that after World War II, Perón opened Argentina to thousands of high-ranking Nazi officials. Above all, he wanted them to help him establish his own aviation industry, including the secret continuation of the Nazi missile program. Some ended up in Perón's secret service; others set up “Mercedes-Benz Argentina” with his support, where demonstrably massive quantities of dirty Nazi money were laundered. The Holocaust co-organizer Eichmann found employment there, along with many other Nazis.

At the same time, Perón implemented extensive social programs aimed at the poorer sections of the population and promoted culture, education, and civil rights, including the introduction of women's suffrage. In foreign policy, he was emphatically anti-American, but in domestic policy, he fought communists and brought the previously heterogeneous trade unions into line. He controlled the press through state-controlled paper quotas. When the previously flourishing economy went downhill, Perón—though the “legitimately elected president”—was expelled by a military putsch in 1955 with the backing of influential entrepreneurs, the church, bourgeois intellectuals, and the CIA.

A permanent change of government was established under the control of the military, the economy continued to decline, and social tensions increased. In the 1960s, armed groups throughout Latin America began the “revolutionary struggle,” including the so-called Montoneros in Argentina. They simultaneously referred to the successful Cuban revolution, Peronism, and the anti-imperialist struggle. Their tactics ranged from organizing soup kitchens in the poor neighborhoods to carrying out armed raids on military facilities. Not least, this movement helped create the pressure that led to Perón's return in 1972. He died in 1974 and his third wife, Isabella Perón, took power. The military overthrew her in 1976.

A military dictatorship ensued, lasting until 1983, which particularly persecuted the Montoneros with an immense bloodshed.

## **Sunday, November 18**

### **La Criatura: The “Performative Counter Summit”**

The two-day festival *La Criatura* was about “thinking up other ways to make politics.” As the organizers put it:

“The politics we make is old. We cannot close our eyes to what is happening in Brazil because it is a global trend.”

The event took place in one of the numerous and largely self-organized cultural centers of Buenos Aires, organized by the Asociación “CRIA”—*Creando Redes Independientes y Artísticas*. In South America, “crias” also means *Lama*—“young animals.”



All kinds of workshops, many of an artistic nature, took place in various adjoining rooms. A long table was set up in the large hall in mockery of the G20 summit. Here, people gradually took seats for the presentation of the various thematic forums.

First, there was a short introduction by a woman dressed up as a monster with snake hands. She read a pithy text:

“A predator devours the world. It is able to destroy countries and nations, cultures and peoples, change nature genetically, turn forests into deserts, undermine the seas and drill into mountains to extract the last mineral fragment. This predator wants to leave us nothing, a humanity freed from everything. In defiance of this devastating scene, there are other herds of monstrous creatures that reinvent themselves in the face of this plundering, that create counter-pedagogy, building utopias and errant becomings.”

Then they presented a historical outline of former summit protests—beginning in the early 1990s, when the anti-globalization movement slowly developed, and passing from the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa to Mar de la Plata (about 400 km south of Buenos Aires), where in 2005, the Organization of American States met in the face of massive protests. They emphasized that over the years, resistance has shifted more and more to the global South and that a specific expression was found there, which still has to be expanded.

This was followed by an impressive lecture by a Mapuche, who told the story of his people and of growing oppression and repression, but also of the resistance and the expressiveness of the Mapuches, which is gaining more and more international attention through social media. In the end, he emphasized amid applause that the struggle of the Mapuche nation cannot be solved solely by granting them their land. Rather, their struggle represents a future model for how to inhabit the earth and they are convinced that it is time to develop alternatives.

There followed are several contributions by representatives of the feminist movement who presented their progress and the growing resistance against patriarchy, stressing that all the different forms of resistance to the capitalist patriarchal system must be given the same importance. They referred to the immense mobilizations of the last few months, in which huge numbers of people took to the streets against the ban on abortion, among other things.

Numerous other contributions followed—for example, a presentation by the representative of the Senegalese Association in Argentina on the growing importance of migration in the face of extensive exploitation and oppression in the regions of the global South, above all in Africa.

Finally, the conference took a position against the current criminalization of the resistance and called for participation in the week of resistance to the G20 from November 25 to December 1.

## **Monday, November 19**

### **The Schedule of the Week of Protest**

The program describes almost 60 public events. Most of them are discussions, workshops, or lectures—many within the framework of the alternative (counter) summit—but there are also a number of public actions. At this point in time, ten days before the summit, not all the events have been announced; this was no different at previous summit protests.

The schedule impressively documents the diversity and internationalism of the upcoming counter-events and protests.

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## **Security Zones and Shantytowns**

On November 30 and December 1, the 2018 G20 summit will bring together the rulers of the 20 most powerful nations for a meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In the third installment of our coverage of the 2018 G20 summit, our international correspondents describe the unprecedentedly massive security operation that is accompanying this summit, the international protest mobilization, and police violence against the poor population in the periphery.

### **Tuesday, November 20**

#### **Border Controls, Security Zones, and a City Blockade**

The government announced on Monday, November 19 that it will be tightening border controls, focusing on the border triangle with Uruguay and Brazil as well as the international airport. They claimed to have “extensive international lists” and that they “will strictly prevent the entry of radical G20 protesters.” In case friends and activists are detained at the airport, the Protest Alliance has set up a round-the-clock legal emergency service.

On Tuesday, the “security junta” chaired by Minister Patricia Bullrich held a press conference; Bullrich is a machine of repression with an oligarchic family background and also some (decidedly dubious) past association with the Montoneros. Everyone expected large security zones and restrictions on freedom of movement, but the scope of what Bullrich announced went beyond the expectations of the assembled capitalist press.

The graded security zones will cover an area of about 20 square kilometers only in the inner-city area—a tenth of the total area of the capital. There will also be “variable corridors” and closed roads to the international airport 40 km away. Within the dark red security zone, the “Villa 31” is located—the so-called “Villa Miseria”—with its approximately 30,000 residents, which is close to the conference venue. As it appears, the residents are to be locked in or out of their homes and their neighborhood. They have virtually no lobby at all to advocate for them; on the contrary, they are highly stigmatized.

The square-shaped area below (to the south) in the following city plans is justified as “protection of the Teatro Colon”—where this Friday, the feudal dinner of the heads of state is to take place. However, the theater is not located in the middle of this zone, but close to the upper left edge, between the metro line B and the zone border. More than 200,000 inner city residents live in this square, which also houses the political and historical center of the city and the entire country, including the Congress and the Plaza de Mayo. The security zones also include the entire port, the inner-city airport, the city’s main arterial roads including the sixteen-lane Avenida of July 9, Retiro Central Station, large parts of the historic Recoleta district, and the expensive new Puerto Madero port quarter. For the latter two, we are talking about approximately 50,000 more residents who will be directly affected by the security around the summit. In addition, there is a

smaller control area to the south, near the Plaza Constitución, which can only be explained by a “troop site” planned there.

In addition to all these security zones, restrictions on local public transport have been announced, on a scale that has never been implemented before at any previous summit. The entire regional rail network and the metro (“Subte”) network will be completely shut down during the G20. This will render travel impossible throughout the city. The same is true for all shipping traffic on the Rio de la Plata, the river that separates the neighboring cities of the metropolitan region and Montevideo in Uruguay from Buenos Aires.

On the other hand, some buses within Buenos Aires “may still run.”

All this is hard to swallow for city residents who have only experienced such conditions during general strikes. This time, however, the aim of the intervention is not a social concern—and certainly not “guaranteeing the safety of the summit”—but rather, cutting off or inhibiting the flow of protest towards the center. In the city center, only police and politicians should move freely. Everyone else—the inconvenient others—should leave for the countryside or stay locked inside their homes.

## **Wednesday, November 21**

### **A Book, an Article, and a Call for a Demonstration**

On Wednesday, the widely read national online newspaper *Infobae* published an article about the multilingual book *To Our Compas in Buenos Aires* by activists from Hamburg and Paris. *Infobae* is considered to be close to the reigning government; it is often cited by the German Foreign Office as a “serious source.” The lengthy article was titled “*Take Care Compas—The Handbook of International Protest that the Government Is Studying ahead of the G20.*”

First, the text briefly presents the concerns of the Argentine government, highlighting the alleged threat posed by international opponents of globalization. After that, however, the article quotes the book at great length in a fairly unbiased manner. For example, the book description appears unabridged and passages referring to the forthcoming summit in Buenos Aires are highlighted. The text is framed as a kind of “guide to protest,” though this is already refuted by the quotations. However, the article sketches a relatively comprehensive picture of the courses of events in Hamburg, chiefly through the quotations. *Infobae* describes it as “ridiculous” that the authors of the book describe the attendance of 80,000 people at the central demonstration as a “success”—a rather small number of participants, by Buenos Aires standards.

Surprisingly, on the same day, the short call for a demonstration in Hamburg to show solidarity with the protests in Buenos Aires, translated into Spanish, appeared on the front of the local protest website in Buenos Aires. The call is for a demonstration on the afternoon of December 1 after an FC St. Pauli home game. The preceding evening, there will be a meeting in a left cultural center in Hamburg to follow the events in Buenos Aires. The December 1 demonstration is also intended as a reaction to the anticipated repression.

### **And International Protests?**

In addition to those in Hamburg, parallel protests will take place in Paris and London. There are probably also plans elsewhere. Very few activists from Europe or North America will come to

Buenos Aires, and not only because of the announced border controls. The flights are expensive and harmful to the environment, police repression is expected to be intense, and the strange conditions in which the G20 will take place in Argentina are likely to deter many more protesters.

The alliance “Confluencia” expects activists from neighboring countries. In view of limited resources and the long distances, however, even within South America, travelling to protests in neighboring countries is by no means standard. Now, the Argentine government has added the offensively announced border closure. The national government and international security management are doing everything they can to minimize the number of participants from outside Argentina. Even journeys from other regions of Argentina will be rendered considerably more difficult by the interruption of the railway connections into Buenos Aires. It is even conceivable that this will extend to regional train connections and bus routes. The announced repression is also having an effect: one of the larger Peronist trade unions has already toned down its mobilization for this reason and in view of next year’s elections. One does not want to be associated too much with the foreseeable (or even conjured up) “riots.”

## **Thursday, November 22**

### **“No Roof, No Land, No Life”**

This is the headline of the progressive, left-leaning daily newspaper *Página 12*. Rodolfo Orellana, 36 years old, of Bolivian origin and father of five children, is dead, most likely murdered by the police. What happened? In the early morning, between 100 and 200 residents attempted to occupy a vacant site in the huge suburb of Matanza. In fact, the owner had already signed a far-reaching temporary use agreement with the local neighborhood association, in which Rodolfo Orellana was also active. This agreement document has been pushed from office to office for a long time in order to take effect legally.

Despite this legal grey zone, the police immediately arrived at the occupation in full gear and shot numerous rubber bullets, seriously injuring several people. A video shows Rodolfo Orellana, likely after his death. As became known later during the autopsy, he died as a consequence of live ammunition entering his shoulder. Based on the exit wound, the shot must have hit him when he was in a stooped posture, either standing or squatting with his back to the murderer.

Police maintain that neither the bullet nor the shell were found; the caliber of the bullet is supposed to be determined in a second autopsy. The police deny the use of firearms, alleging that there were hostilities between Bolivian and Paraguayan groups within the occupiers. Since the bloody political unrest of 2002, it is forbidden for the police in Argentina to carry firearms during demonstrations—and even more so to use them. But it is absurd to imagine that now, during a brutal evacuation, the demonstrators would have shot each other under the eyes of the police.

There were four more arrests, including a mother who was “allowed” to have her baby in the police cell for a short time every three hours to breastfeed. On the following day, there was a fierce and emotionally moving protest rally in the city center.

## **Housing Shortage in the Periphery**

Officially, the city of Buenos Aires covers only 203 km<sup>2</sup> with 2.9 million inhabitants; by contrast, Berlin covers 891 km<sup>2</sup> with 3.6 million. However, there are officially almost 14 million inhabitants in the immediate metropolitan area. In the periphery there are also some isolated “islands for the rich” and areas with a mixed character, but by and large, the “outskirts” range from poor to extremely poor districts and informal settlements. The social and cultural contrast to the official “capital” is dramatic.

The “suburb” Matanza (in English, “slaughter” or “bloodbath”) hosts 1.8 million inhabitants—as many as the city of Hamburg. There are also several “villas,” places with improvised buildings. The housing shortage is most clearly visible in these shantytowns and their surroundings. Migrants from neighboring countries often live in highly crowded and inhumane conditions. Empty spaces are often squatted in order to open up a little more space for survival and life. In addition, there is a widespread “economía popular” via which people organize their everyday lives. Rodolfo Orellana was an activist there.

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## **Student Protests and a Football Riot**

On November 30 and December 1, the rulers of the 20 most powerful nations will meet in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In the fourth installment of our coverage of the 2018 G20 summit, our correspondents recount clashes over neoliberal assaults on the Argentine education system, the counter-summit of left politicians, and the football riots that forced Senator for Justice and Security of Buenos Aires to resign immediately ahead of the G20 meetings.

### **Friday, November 23**

#### **Police Attack Student Protests**

All week long, there had been protests against a change in the lecturer-training system, which is now to be centralized and controlled by the government. Within this framework, 29 institutes are to be closed; in addition, the previous independence of the lecturer committees is to be virtually abolished. In the future, a government-appointed rector will govern the “UniCABA” (*Universidad de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires*). On top of that, dozens of allegedly “useless” professorships are to be cancelled without replacement.

The comparatively liberal, independent university system has long been a thorn in the side of the Macri government, which is why the state began to tackle the structural conversion of UniCABA a year ago. There have been massive protests in response—this is about nothing less than the independence of the universities. In June, the recalcitrant lecturers were at the front of the queue when state employees were deprived of their wages for months as a result of empty state treasuries. The closure of the Ministry of Education followed, together with six other ministries, including the Ministries of Culture and Health. There were strikes; the students showed solidarity with the lecturers, but Macri remained hard.

The final legislation passed on Thursday in the city parliament of Buenos Aires, in which Macri's conservative electoral alliance currently holds a majority. In anticipation, the police had cleared some protest tents on the forecourt and sealed off the street in front of the city parliament with the usual steel barriers on both sides; they also mobilized a massive number of riot police and a water cannon. Clashes erupted, people knocked down barriers, police shot tear gas and attacked the demonstrators with their truncheons. Even the left-wing members of parliament who came out of the meeting on the street were physically harassed. Finally, about 1500 students marched through the city center in a loud demonstration.

## **The University City of Buenos Aires**

With over 300,000 resident students, Buenos Aires has the most students of any city in Latin America. Since Peron's time, the Argentine education system has been more accessible and affordable than any other on the continent. That is why so many people from poorer backgrounds have converged here to study. Yet in order to be able to afford accommodation and livelihood in this comparatively expensive city, the majority of students have to work to pay their way through school, often taking several badly paid jobs at once. This is why all the faculties also offer lectures and seminars in the evening hours. Often, the students simply fall asleep exhausted.

The university can pride itself on its academic past: five of its graduates have been awarded a Nobel Prize, including two Nobel Peace Prizes. In the 1960s and 1970s, the universities were hotbeds of revolution and upheaval; Che Guevara, among others, studied medicine here. In the 1980s, however, the military dictatorship brutally "cleaned up" the universities, murdering thousands of student activists. After that, in the 1990s and especially after the left-wing progressive Peronist Nestor Kirchner was elected president in 2003, things improved a bit again.

The "rollback" has come under Macri. Already today, there are dramatic disparities between the faculties. While, for example, the law faculty is well-funded behind its monstrous façade, the social sciences are falling apart—it is not easy to find a functioning toilet there, and most buildings are dilapidated or even ready for demolition.

## **Saturday, November 24**

### **Popular Reformism or Permanent Revolution?**

The so-called "World Forum of Critical Thinking" organized by CLACSO (*Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales*, Latin American Council for Social Sciences) lasted for one week. Many people, including well-known politicians, appeared at the forum, including ex-presidents Ernesto Samper (Colombia), Dilma Rousseff (Brazil), and José Mujica (Uruguay), not to mention Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, former mayor of Bogotá Gustavo Petro, and Pablo Iglesias of the Spanish party Podemos. Former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, a Peronist, opened the event with her first major public appearance in almost a year. This took place in the big hall of the railway workers sports club. Her core statement was that, in view of the advance of neoliberalism and authoritarianism in large parts of Latin America, all those affected must now stand together; "old categories" from "left or right" will not help anymore. Her headline: "Splits are a luxury we can no longer afford."

The numerous workshops, lectures, films, and cultural events throughout the week were characterized by diversity and internationalism. A total of 25,000 people were said to have attended this “World Forum,” which was also open, including many attendees from neighboring countries, many of whom were representatives from various political parties, universities, and social organizations. By and large, it appears that at least the majority of them left after the Forum rather than remaining in Buenos Aires until the G20. The organizers emphasized that this was not, as the press often claimed, a kind of “counter summit,” but rather a “forward-looking think tank for solutions to the urgent questions about the future.” Similarly, the Forum’s spokespersons avoided publicly calling for decisive protest against the upcoming summit, while often sharply criticizing the policies of the G20 and above all the IMF.

On Friday, the Trotskyist MST (*Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores*, Socialist Workers’ Movement) organized a rally with about 800 participants in front of the Congress, the whole thing already within the frame of the anti-G20 protests. Speakers sharply criticized the protagonists of CLACSO: “Bolsonaro, Macri, and the right did not come out of nowhere... the right won because people were disappointed with the kind of left who presented themselves as an alternative at the ‘Forum of Critical Thinking.’” They also took aim at the Peronists, who do not call for protests against the G20 “because of electoral calculations” or, in the view of the MST speakers, only inconsistently. The same is also true of the FTI (*Frente de la Izquierda y Trabajadores*, Left Workers’ Front), a competing party from the Trotskyist camp, according to an MST spokesman.

It is not particularly surprising that the MST are on their own at their event and the rally is not even mentioned in the media. At the same time, they take a clear position regarding the impending G20 summit:

“In a few days, the members of the G20 summit will arrive. This meeting does not bring any advantages for the people here—instead, they try to intimidate the population. There will be no planes, no trains, no subways, and no buses. They will do everything they can to prevent the protests, but there will be protests anyway.”

And further, to great applause:

“Macri has asked us to leave the city. But they are the ones who should disappear from the city: the G20, the IMF, Macri, Bullrich, and the whole police apparatus.” (see also 20.11.)

Nothing like this was heard at CLACSO.

## **Sunday, November 25**

### **A Football Match Gets Out of Control**

It is the “mother of all battles” in the Argentine football, the city match between River Plate and Boca Juniors—shortened to “River – Boca.” This time, the “Superclasico” is even a “historic” one, namely the first time the bitter city rivals meet in the finals of the “Copa Libertadores,” the South American counterpart of the Champions League in Europe. Unlike in Europe, the final will be played with both legs. Both matches sold out immediately at the opening of the advance sale;

only a few especially expensive tickets reached the market, because the members of both clubs exercised their right to first dibs.

Stadium visits for away fans have been generally prohibited in Argentina since 2013. In the last 91 (!) years, statisticians counted 279 deaths due to violence with a “football background.” This is certainly bad, but rather low in comparison to the much greater number of femicides in the country. Macri, who as president of Boca Juniors became a public figure and then later a politician, wanted to propose something popular for a change, so he talked about allowing away fans this time: “We and our football are adult enough for that now and should show it to the world.” Both clubs, the associations, and the police rejected the proposal on account of security concerns. On the contrary, even post-game victory celebrations in the street were banned.

The complications with the current Clásico started at the end of October, when both matches were pushed forward one week so that the return match would not take place on December 1 as originally planned—i.e., during the G20—a comprehensible albeit rather late decision. The first round at Boca was rescheduled for Saturday, November 10. The Boca fans entered their stadium despite heavy rain, which had already lasted for two days. When the fans had already filled up the stadium, the game was postponed after heated discussions—first for one hour, and finally to the following day. The pitch had become a huge lake, simply unplayable. Now it was covered with a tarpaulin—an idea that could have been implemented before. The match took place on Sunday, November 11, ending in a 2:2 draw. Achieving a draw in an away game means a small advantage for River, especially as they played a bit better. (In Europe, goals scored away from home are counted twice in the case of a draw in the addition after two matches, but that rule does not exist here.)

A week before the return match, tension continued to mount in the city, with the media fanning the flames. None of the numerous Argentine football legends missed the opportunity to comment., including one “analysis” to the effect that “the loser will need 20 years afterwards to recover.” Two days before the return match, Boca fans managed to earn an entry in the Guinness Book of Records: over 50,000 people come to the public final training in the Bombonera Stadium of Boca. Many fans cried; some stormed onto the pitch at the end to embrace the players, who were touched. The security service kept to the background—after all, “a real emotion is always associated with some transgression of the rules.”

Fan clubs in Argentina are often extremely violent and organized in a mafioso manner, and some of them have strong political connections. The leader of the “*Borrachos del Tablón*” (“drunks in a frenzy”), the most notorious of the “Barra Brava” grouping around River Plate, received a visit from the authorities the day before the game. Police accompanied by a public prosecutor searched an apartment belonging to Héctor Godoy, also called *Caverna* (“the Grotto”), which is located close to the stadium. During the search, they confiscated 300 tickets and 7 million pesos (approximately 160,000 €) in cash; *Caverna* remains at large. The tickets are said to have been issued individually to members, but there is speculation about possible forgery. Black market tickets are a “core business” of the Barras Bravas.

The Boca team spent the night before the historic *Superclasico* in a 5-star hotel in the new noble district of Puerto Madero. As they set off by bus in the direction of the “Monumental” (the 67,000-seat stadium of the River Plate), several thousand fans bid them farewell. The bus left with some delay, escorted through the city by a large motorcycle squadron, just like during a state visit. At the same time, the River fans were already let into the stadium. However, about 20,000 were ticketless, waiting in front of the stadium in hopes of an opportunity to get in somehow. There



were black market deals and numerous robberies; in addition, groups of 100 to 200 attempted to overcome the entrance controls by force. The 2000 police officers deployed had their hands full dealing with the situation.

Meanwhile, the Boca bus and its escort were approaching. Shortly before the stadium, they drove towards a bend where about 1500 River fans waited behind a loose police chain. When the bus turned into the curve and slowed down, the crowd threw bottles and stones, breaking several windows of the bus. The police deployed tear gas grenades, but the River fans threw some of them back toward the bus. The driver and several Boca players were seriously injured by shards of glass. Their captain, Pablo Perez, had to go to the hospital with cuts close to his eye; other players, like star Carlos Tévez, breathed a lot of tear gas and then were running dazed past the cameras and through the stadium aisles.

The stadium was fully occupied and the game was scheduled to begin in half an hour, at 5 pm. But the chaos continued in front of the stadium, while one tumultuous crisis meeting in the catacombs followed another. FIFA President Infantino was directly involved. The game was initially postponed by an hour and a quarter to 6:15 pm. The players warmed up on the field and the fans celebrated their stadium-wide choreography. Then Boca captain Perez returned back from the hospital with his eyes bandaged and Tévez told the press that the team was unable to play under those circumstances. In the end, the game was postponed to the next day, Sunday at 5 pm. The River fans left the stadium and went home frustrated.

Sunday, at 1 pm, the game was postponed for an indefinite period. Rivers President Rodolfo D'Onofrio stressed that the match will definitely take place in his own stadium and with an audience. Boca's president, Daniel Angelici—a friend of Macri and Mayor Larreta—demanded a thorough investigation of the incident and later requested that the match and the Copa should be scored for Boca at the green table. The South American football association "Commebol" has now moved the match to December 8 or 9, to take place abroad, in another country.

The Senator for Justice and Security of Buenos Aires, Martín Ocampo, was forced to resign because of the incidents—just a few days before the G20. In any case, he was only in the second row of summit security; Patricia Bullrich holds the scepter. She explained dryly that everything will go better than it would have if the match were still scheduled to take place during the summit.

In the subsequent discussions, there were many rumors about how the chaos at the football match could happen. But first and foremost, the domestic and foreign media have raised the concern: "If they can't even manage a football match, what will happen at the G20?" One can vividly imagine, for example, that the US security sector has lost trust in the transfer convoys organized by the Argentine police—if that trust ever existed at all. The Argentine security forces are now under enormous additional pressure not to allow anything comparable during the summit. In this respect, the riots at the Clásico will presumably serve as a "green card" for violent aggression involving a total of 27,000 security forces.

The Barra Brava boss Caverna, on the other hand, is still at large, making public statements in audio messages via WhatsApp.

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