

Argentina: Poverty and the Militarization of Society

Grupo Impulso Autogestionario

1990

Argentina, a country with an area of 1.2 million square miles (3 million square kilometers), used to be known as the world's granary. Today, out of a population of about 30 million people, nearly 15 million are recognized as "lacking basic necessities." The state cynically uses this euphemism as a cloak for what is commonly known as poverty, spiritual and material misery, hunger and sickness. The capitalist economic model that President Menem calls the "popular market economy" is condemning the majority of the people, who are becoming poorer by the day, to be sacrificed for the escalating profits of agricultural-export oligopolies. Millions of women, children and old people are deprived of proper health care, education and housing. Meanwhile, the system of financial roulette is emptying the pockets of those who produce the country's wealth.

Recently, more than 200,000 Argentines have emigrated. Some are convinced that they will find a sunnier, warmer life in the North. Others are fleeing in anticipation of a new genocidal thrust by the military.

In fact, since April of 1987 the military, counting on the complicity of the politicians, has been targeting the civilian population. We have been experiencing an increasing militarization of society. Once again, men in uniform are swarming out of the barracks. Cities such as Rosario are daily overrun with federal police patrols on the ground and in helicopters.

The laws granting immunity from prosecution approved by Alfonsín (who was suitably obedient in the end), the pardons granted by Menem, and the decrees legalizing the intervention of the armed forces in internal conflicts, together open a somber prospect. They facilitate the use of state terrorism against popular protests and dissent by those opposing domination, exploitation and, ultimately, capitalist barbarity.

The ruling classes, and their political front men who control the government, are using the foreign debt (which might as well be called the eternal debt, since it is unpayable) as an excuse for continued exploitation. They present as indisputable the false alternatives that public services can only be "inefficiently run by the state" or "efficiently run by oligarchies linked to multinational capital." We libertarian socialists know that there are valid alternatives to both: Public services can be operated and managed by their own workers. We also assert that only through the socialization of health care services can health be assured for everyone. The complex problem of housing can be solved through the creation of cooperatives in which members work together

to build and maintain their own homes. But all this would be admittedly quite difficult under the prevailing system of capitalist exploitation and domination.

Still, we don't think that it's necessary to wait for some distant future to fight for dignity and against exploitation. That is why, as a libertarian organization, we are participating right now, alongside others, in the resistance to the state sponsored plundering. We are completely opposed to the social model which aims to create first- and second-class citizens within one country. We are struggling and will continue to struggle against this attempt to impose de facto South African apartheid in this part of the world.

In our city, out of a population of nearly a million, more than 300,000 people are undernourished and living in miserable housing; more than 100,000 men, women and children are destitute. We know that the abundance of the wheat fields is not reaching our children's' mouths because of the manipulations by bureaucrats, clerics, politicians and bankers, perpetuating social injustice.

Our problem has a name: capitalism. And so does the solution: self-managed socialism. Only popular self-organization, the direct democracy of councils and assemblies, self-management and libertarian confederation will contribute to the liberation of all of us who inhabit the continent of "fire and fear."

While continuing to resist the authoritarian advance, and working together in solidarity, let's not forget that there are no quick revolutions; they grow from the ground up.

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