

350,000 say 'No to IMF' in Buenos Aires

On Aug. 29, Argentina's CGT trade union federation brought 350,000 workers into the streets of Buenos Aires to demonstrate against the International Monetary Fund. All political parties, except for that of President Raúl Alfonsín, united around the slogan, "No to the IMF." Workers converged on the central plaza in columns which came from the industrial zones and the interior of the country. Bank workers, who have not been active in recent years, made up a huge column. Observers commented that this shows that Alfonsín's program of capitulating to the IMF has lost support from white collar sectors.

The strike was called for in a document the CGT issued one month earlier on July 30, entitled, "Defend the Nation and Labor, to Defeat Inflation." Excerpts follow:

On April 22, the national plenary of the CGT put into motion an action plan under the slogan, "Democracy begins with the right of Argentine workers to work." The official response has meant that the number of workers fired, suspended or with reduced wages and working hours, has increased catastrophically in a manner totally unprecedented in the history of Argentine labor. . . . Our action plan . . . demanded urgent and concrete official action against inflation, unemployment, speculation, and the deterioration of wages, used by this government as a variable in its adjustment of the economy.

At that time we demanded "a mobilization of creative intelligence and imagination to emerge from the crisis without repeating the International Monetary Fund's recipes, which have not only failed in our country, but in the entire world. . . ."

In response to this demand, the government signed a new memorandum of understanding with the IMF, which aggravated the already existing recessive measures, and immediately announced the adoption of so-called anti-inflationary measures which, in their restrictive character, go beyond even the IMF's most severe guidelines. . . .

We workers have always maintained, and we energetically repeat, *that the only legitimate and true means of fighting inflation is by producing more*, because the reduction of production maintains the fundamental cause of the problem, which is insufficient supply. . . .

The new measures adopted have perfected the perverse nature of the adjustment, *which not only takes wages as its variable, but transfers the primary rigor of same to mass*

unemployment, as a deliberate result of the profoundly monetarist plans put into effect by the government.

These policies, explicitly assumed by the government, are an aggression against the national interest, which is indistinct from sectors of labor and production, and subject the people, who are defenseless in the face of arbitrary economic action, to inhuman living conditions.

The gravity of the situation compromises our destiny as a socially just and economically free nation, and attempts to institutionalize policies of national shrinkage, against which we fought during the [military] dictatorship. We thereby seek today, with the most honorable of intentions, and the deepest patriotic sentiment, agreements to achieve a complete rectification of the current policy direction.

We reject the arrogance of those who take exclusively into account the opinion of international financial power centers, to which they offer detailed reports of our reality which, not even at the official legislative level, do we Argentines know. . . .

The acute symptoms of crisis which approach in the international power centers, and which make the international economic future most uncertain, demand that we strengthen our economy through independent plans which do not expose us to crude conditions, with no possibility of defense. . . .

We believe that the only option for a country, like a family, to emerge from crisis is to produce to the maximum; we believe that work, the Argentine project, not subject to foreign strategies, and credit converted in the motor of growth, are the only efficient factors for national reactivation. . . .

We have witnessed, through the work of earlier monetarists, the planned destruction of our national productive apparatus. We don't want to see new monetarists put up the auction sign for what little has survived in our country. We therefore appeal to all of our spiritual, intellectual, economic and political values so that, together, we can launch a project to liberate Argentina. . . .

Our national proposal

As a first contribution toward a reordering that would allow us to defeat inflation without stopping national growth, we put forward our National Proposal.

Foreign Debt:

1. Establish a moratorium on the payment of service on the so-called debt, because of the vital necessity of applying all national resources to the immediate reactivation of the national economy.

2. Submit to the National Congress, as established by the Constitution, the decision on the nature and legitimacy of the so-called foreign debt, and on the commitments and terms to be negotiated, once the current national emergency is over, definitively excluding any formula that implies renunciation of sovereign immunity, which admits foreign judicial jurisdiction, and makes the State the sole guarantor for repayment of credits contracted or under discussion. . . .