

Shares



23

JAN
2019

Pollution in the port of Mar del Plata: silent death



Politics / Buenos Aires 8th Electoral Sec. / La Tecla / 12 people / 2 topics



Ad by CRITEO

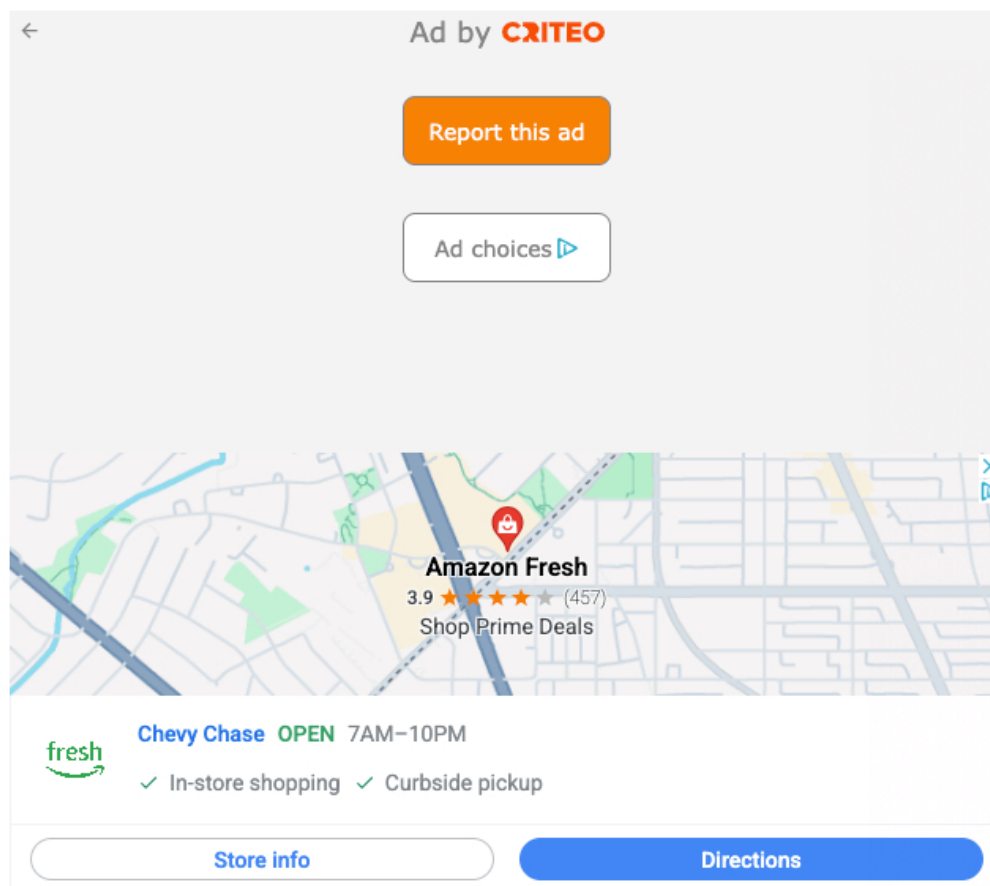
Report this ad

Ad choices

The rupture of a private company's tank caused 40,000 liters of polluting oil to spill into the sea. Political responsibility and a high risk to the environment stem from the indifference of the consortium's manager, Martín Merlini.

The alarm bells had been ringing for some time at the Port of Mar del Plata. Since 2014, when the Moliendas del Sur company abandoned the facilities, there have been successive warnings about the potential danger posed by the polluting waste left exposed in enormous industrial tanks. Five years later, one of them, containing 40,000 liters of toxic oil, collapsed and its contents spilled into the sea. The administration of administrator Martín Merlini, his political supporters, and the inaction of the OPDS (Operation and Development Authority) are at the center of the storm.

When the lifeguards on the Port's beaches arrived at their work stations at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday morning, January 13th, they noticed something unusual was happening. The storm drain, which regularly discharges waste from the flour mills, was larger than usual in volume, had a marked yellowish hue, and a nauseating odor that could be perceived for hundreds of meters. They reported the situation to the Naval Prefecture, and the news began to circulate within the port community.



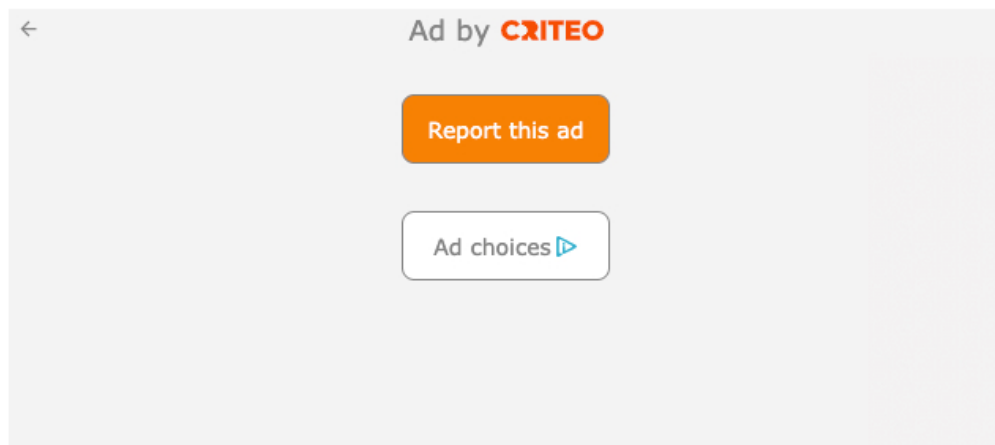
The last of the warnings was very recent. On September 27, 2018, the OPDS conducted an inspection of the former Moliendas del Sur (whose facilities are exclusively under the control of the Port Consortium), as part of the judicialization of the case for the company's closure. In the report, the inspector noted the imminent dangers in the sector. "Inside the plant in sector 16, three metal tanks containing fish oil and one with soluble oil were observed. Tanks 1 and 3 showed signs of instability in the support legs, and all tanks are full," he explained. Precisely, one of those tanks was the one that collapsed in recent days. It was also indicated that "200-liter drums (about 400, according to reports) were found stored outdoors, several of which are severely corroded and at risk of collapse."

The question remains: How, even though La Plata was aware of the imminent risk, did they not take action on the matter? **La Tecla** contacted the OPDS and the Provincial Environmental Control Directorate, who asserted that the responsibility lies with the Port Consortium. They even emphasized that Merlini was required to submit a waste cleanup protocol since October 2018.

The alleged sale of the polluting oil

This same situation was reflected in the minutes, which also specified that "according to the information provided by telephone on 10/08/2018 – by the Consortium – the purchase of a portion of the isinglass oil by a local company was well advanced, to be used as an input in another process."

According to La Tecla, this option would be unfeasible, since the waste is hazardous and must be disposed of, and the only way to recover it would be through complex treatment, which would raise its value beyond any reasonable cost for a company in the sector. In fact, in 2017, Merlini requested quotes from two companies for final treatment, but was ultimately rejected due to the high price.



Meanwhile, a tank similar to the one that collapsed could follow the same path, as could some 400 200-liter drums that are continuously leaching onto the ground, and this leachate ends up in the Nature Reserve area. Furthermore, although the Consortium has an agreement with a waste collection company, there are numerous dumpsters with waste left out in the open, generating potent sources of infection with the presence of rodents and flies.

The alarms were ringing, but no one in power paid attention. Meanwhile, the waters, beaches, and people of Mar del Plata continue to be affected by state neglect.

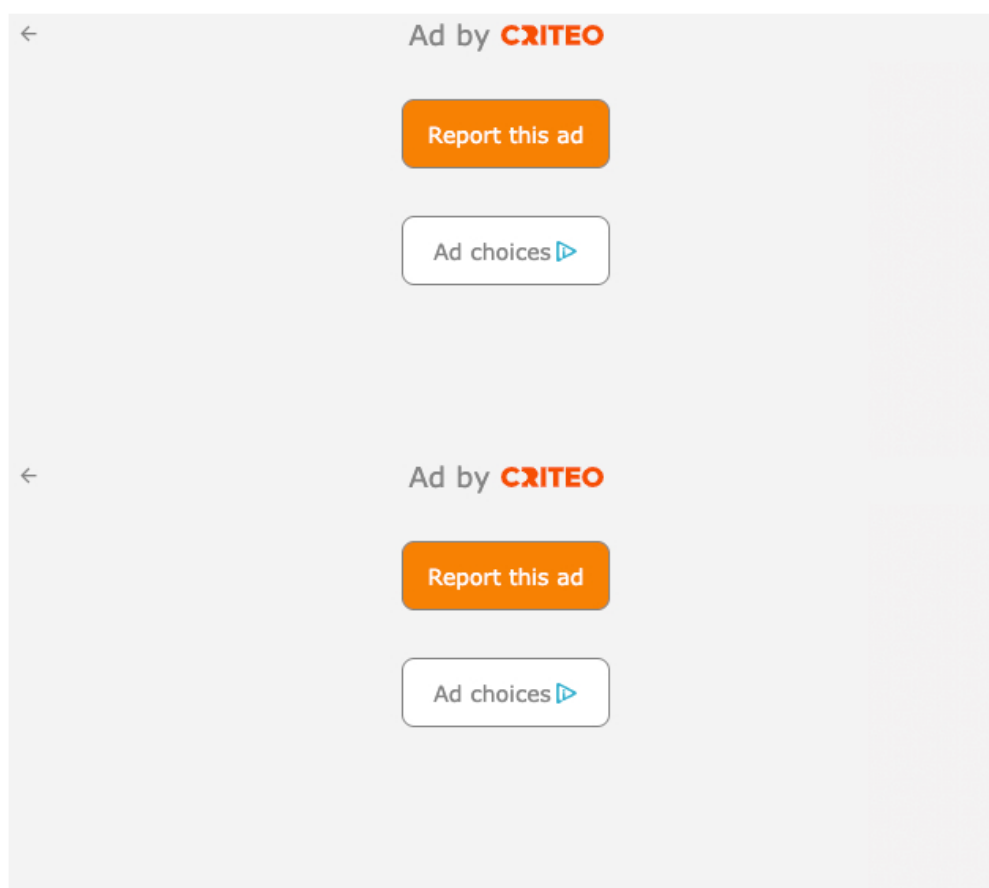
Merlini's political supporters

The environmental disaster at the Port is scrutinizing Martin Merlini, who has chaired the Mar del Plata Regional Port Consortium since April 4, 2016. He arrived with bombastic and promising speeches, in which he spoke of dock restoration and self-sustenance, but his actions always fell short.

Merlini is a PRO activist and a member of the Pensar Foundation. He defines himself as a friend of Guillermo Dietrich and considers himself close to the Governor. It wasn't his more than 20 years of experience as a shipping agent that put him at the top of Vidal's list of candidates to replace Jorge Hidalgo, but rather his fluid political connections. Two key figures catapulted him into the Consortium: Juan Aicega, then councilman and president of the PRO in Mar del Plata, and Marcelo Lobbosco, the former Undersecretary of Port Activities for the Province.

He established a fruitful relationship with the current national representative at the Pensar Foundation, where he quickly became the leading expert on port matters. The other key official was Lobbosco, the current auditor of INIDEP, with whom he also established good relations at the foundation.

Aicega and Lobbosco were the ones who received the approval of the then Minister of Production, Science, and Technology, Jorge Elustondo, and Governor María Eugenia Vidal, who formalized their appointment at the end of March 2016.



Starting in May 2017, Merlini's main link with the Buenos Aires administration became the head of the restructured Ministry of Production, Javier Tizado.

"There is a complete lack of control"

The head of the City Council's Environment Committee, Marcelo Fernández (Marplatense Action), stated that "there is a complete lack of oversight regarding environmental protection. In addition to being in an extremely sensitive area, because the sea is to the east and the Nature Reserve is behind the flour mills." The committee was scheduled to meet last week, but did not meet due to a lack of quorum when four Cambiemos councilors

were absent.

Abandoned Port: A Map of Shared Political Responsibility

Rodrigo Silvosa, head of the Undersecretariat of Ports and Industry of the Province, is the main target of inaction as a result of a crude internal dispute with the

Minister of Production, Javier Tizado. Facing off with the top boss, Silvosa forgot about the Port of Mar del Plata. "He doesn't move a finger, he doesn't pick up a phone. He doesn't care what's happening," say Mar del Plata politicians.

They're not far behind at the OPDS. The head of the Provincial Directorate of Environmental Control is just one of the many positions Sergio Massa negotiated with Vidal when it came to being a "governable opposition."

The person responsible is Néstor Pulichino, one of the members of the Renewal Front of the Third Section, who was a councilman in Esteban Echeverría and also a pre-candidate for mayor. For example, when he moved to the provincial sphere, he did so as an external advisor to Ricardo Pagola, who was the secretary of the OPDS. Today, the Massa supporter has climbed the organizational ladder and become an official of Cambiemos.

The loss of the Security Code

The PRO man's negligence in managing the Consortium is evident, for example, in the loss of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code) last year and the failure to carry out any construction work. There, too, warnings were the order of the day.

In October, the news hit like a bucket of cold water: after 14 years, the Port of Mar del Plata no longer had international security certification and could no longer provide the security guarantees it had pledged through an international agreement signed between port countries following the attack on the Twin Towers.

At the beginning of the year, the consortium had already received a warning from the Naval Prefecture, but months passed, and a new report from the force detected 31 deficiencies in the implementation of security measures.

Less than a month later, the port regained its status, having invested \$1.5 million, although many shortcomings persist.

In November 2017, Merlini launched an ambitious plan to remove and scrap inactive and sunken ships. The goal was to recover 110 meters of docks, initially removing 14 abandoned vessels. The project was supposed to cost the state nothing, as the business owners would bear the high cost. But that never happened.

The Navigation Law states that sunken ships are the responsibility of the State, which is why business owners leave vessels abandoned, hoping that, in this case, Merlini will be responsible for the removal operation. Thirteen months later, the vessels are a veritable

environmental bomb in the waters.



Ad by **CXITEO**

Report this ad

Ad choices 

 Share on Facebook

 Share on Twitter



People in this note (12) |

In this note: [Javier Tizado](#)



Minister of Production of the Province of Buenos Aires.

See Javier Tizado's biography and news

Comment on the note

0 comentarios

Ordenar por Más antiguos ↕





Agrega un comentario...

 Plugin de comentarios de Facebook

People in this note (12)

JAVIER TIZADO



Minister of Production of the Province of Buenos Aires.



[See Biography and News](#)

Topics

Regional Port Consortium of Mar del Plata

Port of Mar del Plata



Ad by **CXITEO**

[Report this ad](#)

[Ad choices](#) 

Latest News



With the ball in Peronism's court



Kicillof: New melodies are delayed and the unspeakable scenario of breaking with the Kirchners



Axel Kicillof's starting eleven for the internal elections in the Chamber of Deputies



Axel Kicillof, Julio Alak, and Gabriel Katopodis demonstrated their expertise in the PBA.

TRES LINEAS

Important information.

FIND US AT:



[Who We Are](#) / [Services](#) / [Contact](#)

The news and expressions reproduced by TRES LINEAS SA do not imply any endorsement of them, and any eventual responsibilities that may arise or derive from them fall upon their authors.

Development by TresLineas SA.©
www.3lservicios.com.ar

