
ARGENTINA

After the coup: power is still unresolved

by Cynthia Rush

The City of London, which views Argentina as one of its important colonies, and British allies Henry Kissinger and Alexander Haig finally staged their long-sought coup in Argentina. On the morning of Dec. 11, Army Commander Gen. Leopoldo Galtieri ousted president Roberto Viola, and arranged to have himself elected President. Galtieri is to serve as President until 1984, while maintaining his current post as head of the army.

The takeover means changes in two crucial areas. A frank adherent of Haig's policy of "confronting" the Soviets at hot-spots around the globe, Galtieri will help shape the environment Haig is seeking to justify his geopolitical adventures in Central America, including possibly deploying Argentine troops into El Salvador. Inside Argentina, Galtieri will attempt to return to the Friedmanite economic regime whose imposition in 1976-80 by former Finance Minister José Martínez de Hoz, a British asset, has produced the crisis wracking the country today. The cabinet ministers most opposed to these policies, Foreign Minister Oscar Camilión and Public Works Minister Gen. Diego Urricariet, have been forced out with Viola; and Galtieri has made it known he is considering de Hoz associates Roberto Aleman or José Dagnino Pastore to head up a new "economics super-ministry."

Galtieri's "white coup" signaled the victory of his eight-month battle to prevent Viola from running a peaceful transition to civilian rule, and to align Argentina behind Haig's geopolitics. When Viola, suffering from hypertension under the pressures against him, announced Nov. 7 that he was taking a 15-day medical leave, Galtieri brought his war for power into the open. His press conduits published the praise lavished on him personally by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and other top Reagan administration officials during the early-November Latin American Army commanders' conference at Ft. McNair, Virginia, as proof he had Washington's backing for the \$1.5 billion debt relief which Argentina desperately requires.

Many sources confirmed to *EIR* that General Galtieri had obtained Washington's recent reconciliation with

the cocaine generals of Bolivia as a personal triumph. This suggests that Galtieri is aligned with the Argentine military faction which supervised the July 19, 1980 "Cocaine Coup" in Bolivia and is anxious to provide similar services in Central America or the Middle East.

During his Nov. 26-Dec. 1 stay in Buenos Aires, Henry Kissinger met in public and in private with top active-duty military officers and with Martínez de Hoz and his associates to urge them to complete the coup against President Viola. In a press conference, Kissinger called for Argentina to join in an Inter-American police force for Central America, since "the United States could not act alone there." At a well-publicized "private" meeting with troop commanders, Kissinger advised, "Be careful, it seems to me that you [Viola] are moving too quickly toward an electoral opening.

There are no guarantees that Kissinger and his subalterns will have an easy time imposing their policies.

Resistance is still strong in Argentina to putting the potential industrial giant through still another round of Milton Friedman's "miracle" economics. Despite backing from Kissinger and Haig, and consolidation of his power in the armed forces through recent promotions, Galtieri could not convince Viola to graciously step down and cite his heart ailment as an excuse. He told Galtieri he would only resign for "political reasons." In the end, Galtieri forcibly removed Viola, making it clear a coup had occurred over crucial policy questions.

Those policy questions revolve largely around the fact that de Hoz's economics have put 4 million people out of work and are driving hundreds of thousands more out of the country. In this situation, even the mention of a return to de Hoz's policies provokes enraged responses from the population. Last week, a manic de Hoz, who expects to see his team back in office, set off a lynch-mob response when he released his new book which blames the current economic crisis on the Viola government's "abandonment" of his policies.

"De Hoz's policies have destroyed our productive apparatus," a former industry minister angrily responded. "They have subjected Argentina to a relative backwardness never before seen in its history." While other government and political leaders blasted de Hoz for his "political myopia," the Armed Forces Club of the province of Córdoba publicly declared de Hoz to be a *persona non grata*. On the morning of Dec. 9, ten admirals met to discuss de Hoz's remarks, and warned that they would hand in their resignations if he or any of his associates were named to the finance ministry.

If, as expected, Galtieri tries to enforce his policies through greatly increased repression, he could find himself in real trouble. Like all Argentine presidents, he will not find it easy to smash the still-powerful Peronist movement whose influences extend not only to the organized-labor movement but to sectors of the military.