

Argentina agrees to halt high technology

by Cynthia Rush

Argentine Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella, who has never hidden his loyalties to the British Foreign Office, is waging an unprecedented campaign to dismantle once and for all the scientific and technological achievements of the past 50 years, particularly the country's nuclear program. The foreign minister's efforts are directly linked to the Anglo-American political establishment's policy of eliminating the institution of the Armed Forces, which has historically played a crucial role in the development of Argentina's scientific infrastructure.

Beginning with the government of social democrat Raúl Alfonsín (1983-89), Argentina's nuclear program came under intense attack, largely through the vehicle of budget cuts dictated by the country's foreign creditors. As a result, the program is now practically moribund. But the Oxford-trained Di Tella, whose family has always represented British financial interests in Argentina, isn't satisfied with this. He complained on March 7 that Argentina had invested "millions of dollars in the nuclear program and had achieved only certain technological results." A day earlier, he remarked that "it makes no sense to continue with the current path of nuclear research and development."

Di Tella and President Carlos Menem are using the Bush administration's campaign against "weapons of mass destruction" as a pretext to smash whatever scientific capabilities Argentina still possesses. The dismantling of the Air Force's Condor II missile project, and its transfer to a civilian agency under the control of the presidency, is one result of this policy, although according to the March 9 London *Financial Times*, the U.S. State Department is complaining that the Argentine Air Force is still withholding information on the project, "raising concerns about the extent of transfers made to a sister-project in Baghdad that was part of Iraq's nuclear-capable missile development program." The article brags that the United States nevertheless had good information on Argentine-Iraqi links in the project, because it "had a deep-cover agent working in the Condor procurement network in Switzerland and Austria."

In early February, the Argentine government allowed officials from the U.S. National Aeronautic and Space Administration and the U.S. State Department to inspect the Condor project site in Falda del Carmen in Córdoba. Ac-

ording to the recently published Argentine book *Operation Condor II*, the missile's destruction was one of the conditions demanded by Great Britain for reestablishing diplomatic relations with Argentina following the Malvinas War—which explains Di Tella's prominent role in the matter.

U.S. applies 'dual-use' weapon

In February of this year, at the request of the Bush administration, the Argentine government halted a shipment of machine tools and piping from the INVAP company to Iran. INVAP is one of the only remaining companies to still produce nuclear technology. Only hours before the material was to be shipped to Teheran, the Foreign Ministry classified it as "dual use" technology, and ordered the shipment halted. The daily *Clarín* reported March 2 that U.S. Ambassador Terence Todman had sent a letter expressing Washington's concern that by going through with the sale, Argentina might be contributing to the building of the "Iranian bomb."

By failing to fulfill the contract with Iran, INVAP stands to lose at least \$17 million, and could lose hundreds of millions more if other countries with whom it has similar contracts—Algeria, Egypt, and Turkey—perceive it as an unreliable trading partner. The Iranian government, whose trade with Argentina is worth \$500 million annually, has said it will now review its entire trade relationship with the country.

That suits Di Tella just fine. On March 7, he said that countries like Iran, Algeria, Iraq, and Cuba are "unreliable," adding that Argentina would only export advanced technology to those countries which sign and respect nuclear safeguard agreements. He also promised that Argentina would shortly sign the Tlatelolco non-proliferation treaty, by which the Ibero-American continent would be declared a "denuclearized zone." Carlos Menem likewise said recently that his government would submit to the related Anglo-American demand to sign the Missile Control Technology Regime (MCTR).

For this policy to succeed, Di Tella insists that the "mission" of the Armed Forces be redefined to cohere with George Bush's "new world order." He recently told the country's military leadership that the Armed Forces have become "the fundamental tool of the nation's foreign policy." To prove this, the government has announced it intends to send large numbers of military men out of the country each year—as many as 2,800—to participate in United Nations-sponsored peacekeeping forces.

Not everyone agrees. After hearing Di Tella speak on the topic, Defense Minister Erman González responded that Armed Forces participation in international peacekeeping missions is "subsidiary to their essential mission, which is the preservation of national sovereignty." Army sources told the daily *La Nación* that "military doctrine views as its first priority the defense of Argentine territory, and as secondary actions, missions such as have just been assigned them by the Executive branch."