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## Interview: Orlando Figueroa

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# Will U.S. policies result in Argentina going pro-Soviet?

*The following interview was granted to EIR by Orlando Figueroa, from Tucumán, Argentina. Mr. Figueroa, an agricultural engineer, is a political leader in Argentina's Peronist movement and attended the Fourth International Conference of the Schiller Institute, held in Richmond, Virginia on Jan. 12, 13, and 14 of this year. He has been active for many years in the Peronist movement, and is currently the official representative in Buenos Aires of Governor Fernando Riera of Tucumán.*

**EIR:** Could you describe your work inside the agricultural sector of Tucumán?

**Figueroa:** Well, I am an engineer trained in "zoo-technology"; that is, I am immersed in the animal husbandry side of things. Zoo-techniques deal fundamentally with animals, not so much with plants and vegetable life. I have worked in several agricultural cooperatives as an extension agent, and later we tried and succeeded in forming some cooperatives in zoo-techniques. Right now we have some cooperatives which are set up, and we must build them up in an important way so they can move ahead.

**EIR:** Could you describe for us the effects on the province of Tucumán, and on a somewhat broader level, of the policies of the recent years—the economic policies of the IMF—on the agriculture sector?

**Figueroa:** The coup d'état of 1976 put Peronism out of power, and put in its place the nefarious military government, with an economic program carried out by José Martínez de Hoz, a front man for Rockefeller. Martínez de Hoz is undoubtedly one of the interpreters of the ideology of piracy for Argentina, where on one side the farmer was encouraged by the press to plant more land—that is, that he extend the farming limits. This is something which the producer, placing confidence in what the military government was saying at the time, did. To do so, he had to get credit, to plant a greater area than usual. He got credit, to buy machinery, to buy seeds and other elements which were necessary to extend his agricultural boundaries.

The producer who arranged credit to buy a tractor was hit by usurious interest rates on his loan. The result was that he then had to sell not just the tractor, but the land, in order to pay off the credit granted for the tractor. This brought about great ruin, great misery to Argentine agriculture, with the additional insult, that then along came the front men for Martínez de Hoz, in the wake of these economic problems, and bought up the land for a song.

This was a process which lasted six to seven years, and was carried out in conjunction with another element—the exorbitant rise in the interest rates that were paid out to depositors in the banks, 15% to 20%. The result of this was to put a brake on the productive economy, rewarding instead an economy of speculation. So then this landowner, who sold his land far below its value, put his money into short-term accounts with 15-20% monthly interest, and it proved much more lucrative than planting wheat or sorghum, which would perhaps give him a 10% profit. . . .

**EIR:** Is there a smaller number of producers in the agriculture sector of Argentina generally these days? The large cartels and multinationals operating, such as Cargill and Bunge and others, which operate at the international level, have even hit hard at the farm sector here in the United States. How are you affected by their policies?

**Figueroa:** The large multinationals prevent the farmers from organizing themselves and consequently from being capable of breaking away from the mechanism of supply and demand which is what sets the price in the liberal market. Looking at it from another angle, when there is an excess of supply, when the farmers are increasing their products at a time when demand is staying more or less stable, logically what falls is the price. Then the large multinationals take advantage of the situation and move in and buy. They have big stockpiles, and large silos where they can keep the grain until the price goes up. . . .

On the other hand, we see a general drop in [the number of] small producers, and increasing concentration in large producers—but "large producers" in quotes, because these

people are pirates. That is, this activity regarding land ownership . . . is the opening stage to consolidating increasingly larger landholdings, throwing out the small producers. . . .

**EIR:** And, in this context, what has been the role of the Socialist bloc countries in the farm sector?

**Figueroa:** Our rural producers are totally desperate, because they see no solution to their problem. Representatives of the Socialist bloc entered with a variety of offers. For example, one way to break this supply-and-demand mechanism is by having silos to store and sell the product when it reaches its best price. The other is to industrialize the product as a raw material. Then the Socialist bloc countries came in to offer our farmers the chance to industrialize, to install a turnkey factory, and to pay over 30 years, or 40 years, and with whatever products they can. . . .

In Tucumán, for example, we have the specific offer from Poland and Czechoslovakia, and before that Hungary, which offered to install a hospital complex and also highly complex health centers. The province would pay via barter—that is, via products which can't be sold at this time on the world market, for example, sugar. So this exchange is quite ideal at this moment, because [the East bloc countries] are the only ones to present an alternative solution.

At the same time, this [agricultural] producer identifies the people of the United States with Henry Kissinger; thus he identifies the people of the United States as exploiters. Then come the Soviet agents, and they easily spread anti-U.S. feeling. The kind of Americans I have had the good fortune to meet here are not known there [in Argentina].

**EIR:** What then should the U.S. attitude be in financial institutions, in regard to Argentina. What changes should the United States make?

**Figueroa:** Basically, it should understand that if it continues using the tools of the Trilateral Commission, committing injustices against the peoples of the world, especially with Argentina in this case, it will see the installation of a Soviet or pro-Soviet government in the very short term. So they must humanize capital, fundamentally.

Stated from the standpoint of Peronism, the U.S. should give the opportunity for a certain economic independence at the level of nations, that is, to encourage concrete development. We Argentines do not want to be given fish, we want to be shown how to fish ourselves. . . . It is important that the people of the United States and its officials realize that human beings, men, people, made in the image and likeness of God, live in Argentina, and therefore have the same rights as anyone else, independently of skin color, independently of other differences. . . .

**EIR:** In the past months we have seen items in the Argentine press on the penetration, specifically in the province of Tucumán, of a few units of the Shining Path terrorist group of

Peru. Do you have any information you can share with us on this?

**Figueroa:** Five or six months ago, a meeting was held in Tucumán, sponsored by the Argentine University Federation run by the communists. A kind of congress was held for three to four days, and it was there that some people from Shining Path got in contact with some student groups. They understand again that the path [for their objectives] is through the university. . . .

**EIR:** It has in fact been said that there exist, or existed, camps in Tucumán for the training of Shining Path cadres. This has been documented. I know the governor recently made charges to this effect.

**Figueroa:** Yes, the governor made those statements and gave them to the President. And these accusations are borne out by provincial authorities which have toured the province. There are remains of camps in five places in the province. I have a map where the training camps are marked, not necessarily target practice camps, but direct reconnoitering of terrain to be able to develop a form of guerrilla fighting in the zone. . . .

**EIR:** We have documented, as have others generally, that Shining Path has very close links to drug trafficking. This is the case in Peru, and in the whole area. Isn't this an important issue as far as Tucumán is concerned, and also given the increase in drug running in Argentina in recent months?

**Figueroa:** It is extremely important. So much so, that upon my return to my province, my country, I plan to pull some threads together for closer relations. Interestingly, marijuana plantations are beginning to be discovered in Tucumán, something which has never occurred before. This goes together with what I mentioned earlier. If our farmers obtain loans for planting, and these loans come with 20% interest rates, there is no farming activity which can produce 20% profitability, except if we go into the drug business—opium or planting marijuana, etc. This is the only thing which is sufficiently profitable for me to pull in earnings of 30%—20% to pay off the banks run by the Trilateral Commission and the IMF, and 10% to enable me to make myself into a revolutionary. Otherwise, there's no way.

Therefore, they are indeed related. In the guerrilla period we were aware that there were two drug groupings—one, the line of drugs run by the depraved of society, which will always be with us. But there was a second line of drugs run by the guerrillas. And today that is reappearing. The police found the plantations in abandoned houses in hippy-style communities, which are proliferating in Tucumán, imported from Buenos Aires. These have been found in the department of Bellavista, the home department of the governor. Therefore it is important to get to work and pull together the in-depth intelligence on this issue, something I will do as soon as I arrive in Buenos Aires.