

# Kissinger, de Hoz, and the real culprits of Argentina's 'dirty war'

by Cynthia R. Rush

For almost three months, international press has put a spotlight on the trials in Buenos Aires of former members of Argentina's military junta, which ruled that nation from March 1976 until December 1983. Nine officers from the Argentine Army, Navy, and Air Force are charged with having permitted, or ordered, the use of military and paramilitary terror which resulted in the killing, torture, and disappearance of thousands of innocent victims. This was Argentina's "dirty war."

The anglophile press of the United States is particularly having a field day with the trials. The Alfonsín government has invited hundreds of foreign reporters to Buenos Aires to report on them. Since the end of April, when the trials began, papers like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have portrayed them as a small version of the post-war Nuremberg trials, lecturing any would-be military dictators on the evils of employing political terror against the population.

The trials are not simply a media event, however. As courtroom testimony demonstrates, the crimes perpetrated against the Argentine population are real. In the name of "fighting subversion," military and paramilitary death squads detained, tortured, maimed, and killed thousands of citizens, regardless of their political affiliation or their sex or age. This included pregnant women, cripples, and young children.

At one time in the late 1970s, having a member of one's family or a relative among the list of "disappeared" was commonplace in Argentina. The psychological wound left in the population as a result, remains unhealed today.

Nonetheless, the trials are flawed. While prosecutors have presented more than ample evidence of atrocities and human rights violations, they have not brought to trial the man who carried out both the *military* and *economic* policy during that period, at the bidding of the Anglo-Swiss banking apparatus that he, like the aging British agent Raul Prebisch, obediently serves. That man is José Martínez de Hoz, then finance minister.

## The modus operandi

When the military junta staged its coup against president Isabel Martínez de Perón in March of 1976, Argentina was plagued with a terrorist upsurge and economic chaos. Leftist

guerrillas, run by the Society of Jesus in coordination with official intelligence services, had already created an environment of terror and uncertainty with kidnappings and indiscriminate bombings.

The faction of Argentina's armed forces allied with Henry Kissinger and the former State Department "roving ambassador," Gen. Vernon Walters, responded to this situation with a strategy that was intended to submerge the country in chaos. They unleashed an offensive of *illegal* repression and blind terror—not to end "subversion," but to enforce the policy of deindustrialization and economic looting ordered by de Hoz's oligarchic sponsors. Kissinger and the New York banking community agreed with Martínez de Hoz that Argentina should become the "fourth leg" of the Trilateral Commission: one big "farm" for food export, devoid of industry and advanced technology.

The only way that such a policy could be imposed on Argentina's population, accustomed as it was to economic growth and prosperity and imbued with a sense of cultural optimism, was through a process of psychological brainwashing and indiscriminate terror, for which London's Tavistock Institute is famous. Under these conditions of psychological warfare, no one would dare to raise his voice in protest for fear of being branded "subversive," or finding himself "disappeared." As one witness described it, "The terror was indiscriminate, and terror paralyzes."

## Killing the nation

In September 1977, six months after taking power, Finance Minister "Joe" de Hoz visited the mountains of Tucumán province, where Gen. Antonio Bussi led the military campaign against the guerrillas of the Peoples' Revolutionary Army, the ERP. In conversation with the minister, Bussi handed him his mountain knife and told him to keep it as a gift. "Keep it, even if just as a paperweight . . . so that you will always have present in your mind, and always remember that, while I kill ten guerrillas in the mountains, you create another 100 with your economic policy."

De Hoz's monetarist policies could not have produced any other result. He targeted what Argentines were most proud of: their industrial infrastructure—the vanguard nucle-

ar program, for example—and the highly skilled labor force. The de Hoz “team” quickly tore down tariff barriers that protected Argentina’s industrial apparatus, flooding the country with cheap imports to “stimulate competition.” As industry collapsed, so did the skill levels of the labor force, one of the most productive on the Ibero-American continent. As documented in the book *Argentina Industrial*, published in 1983 by *EIR*, the productivity of Argentina’s labor force plummeted beginning in 1978. Skilled professionals and workers were forced from their jobs, and ended up driving taxis, running bakeries, or simply leaving the country in droves.

Under de Hoz, Buenos Aires’ financial center, known by the British term *the City*, became an apparatus to service any kind of speculative venture or dirty money operation. Billions of dollars entered the country under the guise of “loans”—the foreign debt quadrupled during de Hoz’s term in office—or simply as short-term, speculative investment.

Those who profited from speculative or illicit operations took their money out of the country and placed it in Swiss, New York, or London banks. An estimated \$25 to \$30 billion left the country during this period. To this day, no one has exposed the participation of foreign banks, such as David Rockefeller’s Chase Manhattan, in Martínez de Hoz’s illicit financial operations.

It was on the basis of this destruction, that the Jesuit-trained leadership of the leftist *Montoneros* and *ERP*, recruited thousands of naive youth into their ranks. These youngsters simply became the cannon fodder for confrontation with the military, or for carrying out terrorist operations.

### **Tavistockian terror**

Reliable sources in Buenos Aires have told *EIR* that Martínez de Hoz personally chose the officers to head up the country’s various military command posts, on the basis of their repressive capabilities. Many of those officers either oversaw, or did not object to, the deployment of the illegal death-squad apparatus, founded by Argentine mystic José López Rega, but controlled from Brazil by the alliance between the Gnostics and the Tradition, Family, and Property (TFP) cult. López Rega was a high-priest in the Brazilian cult founded by his “spiritual adviser” and controller, Claudio Ferreira.

Witnesses at the Buenos Aires trials have provided gruesome examples of how the terror worked:

Life in the city of La Plata, capital of the province of Buenos Aires, became a nightmare for the population. Under the direction of provincial police chief Gen. Ramón Camps, “task forces” roamed the city randomly seeking victims. In one operation known as the “Night of the Pencils,” in September, 1976, police picked up 10 high-school students ranging in age from 14 to 17. The ten were accused of participating in “subversion of the schools” for demanding that busfare discounts be maintained in the city for students. Even this

small concession to the living standards of the population could not be tolerated by Martínez de Hoz. The students were savagely tortured. Of the ten arrested, 7 remain “disappeared” today. Three survived.

A reporter for a Buenos Aires newspaper based in La Plata, told the weekly *La Semana*, “Frequently, the task forces picked up students, so they would finger other presumed extremists. These kids knew that after they went down the list, they would be killed, so they named anyone: neighbors, people who had nothing to do with anything. Hundreds of innocents must have died this way. This led people to stop going out on the street during the day.”

Norberto Nelson Bugallo, a member of the Permanent Assembly on Human Rights, told *La Semana* that the terror “meant that any person could be taken, and detained. Thus, the family nucleus and friends were left hanging, immobilized, because they thought that anything they did, could potentially harm the kidnaped victim. So they made no denunciations, no petitions of habeas corpus. . . . To impose this system of terror, there were times in which a machine-gunned corpse would be left on the streets for hours, in view of everyone. . . .”

Aside from inducing psychosis in the population, the de Hoz-Kissinger strategy had an even more specific target: to destroy the *institution of the armed forces*. The idea was to implicate everyone, regardless of rank, in atrocities against innocent victims, thereby committing all to silence. The atrocities continued, as did the economic destruction of the nation.

Soldiers recruited from the population at large, or lower level police officers, were forced to witness, or participate in, horrifying tortures of victims. Omar Eduardo Torres, a policeman from 1975 to 1982, reported that when he was assigned to one of several clandestine detention centers in Tucumán, he saw guards “pull out the nails, and sometimes the ears,” of detainees. One victim “was thrown into a tank with 200 liters of gas, to which they set fire.” Many soldiers also joined the ranks of the “disappeared” for reasons having nothing to do with subversion.

Having suffered this moral degradation, the Argentine armed forces were incapable of defending their nation in the 1982 Malvinas war against the British. There is no better way to degrade the identity of the armed forces as an institution which defends and serves the national interest than to involve it in a war against its own people.

The trials taking place in Buenos Aires will serve for little else than documenting horrors, unless they place the real culprits of the “dirty war” on the witness stand. Otherwise, with the Alfonsín government’s capitulation to the International Monetary Fund, Kissinger’s friends are determined to put Argentina through a process of economic disintegration and social upheaval that will make even the “dirty war” look like a picnic. The process has already begun, and it is unlikely that the nation will survive.