

Scandal in Argentina over government ties to terrorism

by Cynthia Rush

The terrorist assault on the Third Infantry Regiment at La Tablada, which occurred Jan. 23, has touched off a scandal in Argentina which could prove the undoing of social democratic President Raúl Alfonsín and his Unión Cívica Radical (UCR).

The President has yet to explain how an international narco-terrorist apparatus, unseen in Argentina since the mid-1970s, has come into being over the past two years with apparent impunity. Interior Minister Enrique Nosiglia asserts that there is no threat of a terrorist upsurge in the country, and characterized the La Tablada incident as just a "terrorist spasm."

Hardly. The commando group which attacked the army regiment, most of whose members were from the All for the Fatherland Movement (MTP), reportedly included Nicaraguans and Bolivians who admitted to being trained in Spain, Nicaragua, and Cuba. Although only 50 people staged the actual attack, another 300 were involved in logistical support and agitational operations outside the base. According to the group's attack plans, captured by military intelligence, this assault was to have been the first of a series of "popular uprisings," including attacks on several other military installations.

Chile's interior minister has not ruled out the possibility that members of the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front, the armed wing of the Chilean Communist Party, may have also participated in the assault. Investigators are also looking into the role of Peru's Shining Path terrorists. The Uruguayan Tupamaros, terrorists of the 1970s who are now "legalized" in that country, offered their full support to the MTP.

Intelligence reports reveal that the MTP had been organizing in Argentina since at least 1986 to create an insurgent movement modeled on the Nicaraguan Sandinista Liberation Front. In 1987, the state intelligence service, SIDE, presented a report to the Alfonsín government, documenting the MTP's ties to Nicaragua and Cuba, and detailing the trips of MTP leaders back and forth to Nicaragua. It provided information on the scope of the organization and an accurate profile of its recruiting methods, in which high school-aged youth were prime targets (see **Documentation**).

The report also revealed that the MTP was in fact a front

for the Trotskyist People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), a guerrilla group active in the 1970s, many of whose members were jailed for terrorism. Most of the MTP's national executive committee was made up of trained ERP guerrillas, who were released from jail in 1984 under Alfonsín's "respect for human rights" campaign.

The fact that Enrique Gorriarán Merlo of the ERP, thought to be the mastermind of the La Tablada attack, worked with the Sandinista Southern Front under Eden Pastora establishes the MTP connection to the CIA's Central American and Caribbean drug trafficking apparatus, run through Costa Rica's Pepe Figueres and fugitive banker Robert Vesco. Cuba is also a major player in this drug trade. Roberto Sánchez, the MTP'er who commanded the four assault groups that attacked La Tablada, had also trained extensively in Nicaragua.

In May of 1987, a Peronist activist in the province of Jujuy, whose letter has been made available to *EIR*, reported to Alfonsín and the Interior Ministry that funds from the Argentine-Bolivian drug trade were financing MTP guerrilla training in that region. He documented how MTP lawyer Jorge Baños, killed at La Tablada, was organizing in the region and called on the President to "act decisively" against "Marxist subversion and drug trafficking, which have united" to create a terrorist upsurge in the region. The individuals working with Baños in this operation had been involved in armed subversion in the mid-1970s in Jujuy.

The MTP also included a number of "ex"-priests, followers of the Gnostic "theology of liberation" ideology which has been used so successfully to destroy the nations of Central America. Several priests associated with MTP were involved in building an anti-Catholic "people's Church" in Argentina, on the pagan Sandinista model, which identified the armed forces as its chief enemy. The last issue of the MTP paper, *Entre Todos*, had an attack on the religious devotion of nationalist army officers led by Col. Mohamed Ali Seineldín.

Government on the hot seat

What has shaken up the political scene in Buenos Aires are the reports that members of Alfonsín's own cabinet, and other prominent Radical leaders, are directly linked to, or

have provided protection for, the MTP and the ERP.

The Buenos Aires daily *Clarín*, reported Feb. 7 that three weeks before the attack on La Tablada, Interior Minister Nosiglia, a leader of the Radical Party's left-wing *Junta Coordinadora* was seen at the Buenos Aires nightclub "Palladium" with friend and former bodyguard Francisco Provenzano, one of the MTP terrorists who participated in the assault. Provenzano was an ERP member in the 1970s, but his family has reportedly played a prominent role in the UCR for a number of years. According to intelligence sources, Provenzano and his wife took three trips to Managua between 1986 and 1988.

The Jan. 20 edition of the intelligence weekly *El Informador Público* charged that Nosiglia had asked MTP leaders to denounce the existence of a plot to overthrow the Alfonsín government, and to name Peronist presidential candidate Carlos Menem and Army Col. Mohamed Ali Seineldín as the conspirators. In an effort to discredit the peronist presidential campaign, MTP "human rights" activist Jorge Baños publicly accused Menem and Seineldín of plotting a coup and filed suit against them in federal court just a week before the commando raid. The same *Informador Público* article refers to Nosiglia's relationship with Francisco Provenzano.

Allegations have also been made about Carlos Becerra, secretary general to the Presidency, whose aide is reportedly an MTP leader in the province of Córdoba. Like Nosiglia, Becerra belongs to the UCR's *Coordinadora*, most of whose older members were part of Argentina's "New Left" in the 1960s and 1970s. During that period, a faction of the *Coordinadora* became part of the Trotskyist left which then provided cadre for the ERP.

Immediately following La Tablada, Carlos Menem charged that the "intellectual authorship" of the tragic events could be found among "politicians and journalists linked to the government." Dr. César Arias, Menem's legal representative, went further. In a 21-page document presented to the undersecretary of Justice, he presented evidence on the "operative connivance among a sector of the ruling party, some government officials, and that political force known as the MTP."

Government officials and Radical leaders responded to these allegations with loud protestations of innocence and denunciations of the Peronist candidate, charging him with slander, of acting irresponsibly, and of promoting a "witch-hunt" against legitimately constituted political organizations. But as several analysts have noted, perhaps the government "doth protest too much." Even with all the evidence in, sources close to Argentina's foreign ministry, run by notorious Socialist International asset Dante Caputo, are denying that Nicaragua provided any "organic support" to the MTP.

Cui bono?

The background and character of the Jan. 23 attack, in which 40 people died after a 30-hour confrontation between

army troops and subversives, confirm that the international social democracy is working hand in hand with Soviet-backed insurgents to destroy the institutions of Western civilization.

Alfonsín's wing of the Radicals shares with the narco-terrorists a desire to destroy the institution of the armed forces and any other nationalist political institutions opposed to the International Monetary Fund's looting of the country. The MTP squad that took over La Tablada insisted it was acting to prevent an "imminent" military coup, stating that it was tired of the "arrogance" and the "crimes" of the armed forces.

The international oligarchy which backs these insurgent movements is disturbed that military leaders such as Colonel Seineldín are rallying nationalist forces against the U.S. and Soviet "New Yalta" accords which relegate Argentina and other developing sector nations to the trash heap. The oligarchy also fears that if Peronism takes the presidency in the May 14 elections, the combination of nationalist forces that could come into being will be beyond their control.

Alfonsín's strongest backers in the United States, found within the Project Democracy grouping, are straightforward in their demand that the armed forces must be stripped down, to wipe out nationalist resistance. One of Project Democracy's assets, the Democratic Party's National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, has just issued the proceedings of a conference it sponsored in Santo Domingo in 1988, which say that Argentina must impose a military doctrine based only on "territorial defense" rather than fighting domestic subversion or getting involved in internal politics. The report calls for a greater civilian role in intelligence gathering and control, and states that police rather than military forces should be used to combat drug trafficking.

This is the context in which the emergence of the MTP can be understood. Over the past two years, public and private intelligence sources have provided the Argentine government with hard facts on the narco-terrorist nature of the MTP. *At any time, the government could have acted on these reports. Instead, they were ignored.*

The irony is that while Alfonsín's government encouraged the growth of the MTP and its "human rights" fronts, because their activities enhanced the government's anti-military goals, it will now suffer the consequences. After the La Tablada incident, the armed forces have been strengthened. There is even discussion of possibly altering the anti-military National Defense Law passed under Alfonsín's regime, to permit the military to play a role in fighting domestic subversion.

The MTP survivors of La Tablada have taken refuge in Montevideo, and warn that they will escalate their terrorist activities against the government as well as the armed forces. Since the attack on La Tablada, there have been at least two other incidents reported. On Feb. 6, an unidentified group fired on an Air Force base in Mendoza on the Chilean border; and in the early morning of Feb. 13, unidentified individuals fired at the Third Army barracks in Rio Cuarto.

The intelligence report Alfonsín ignored

The following excerpts are taken from the 1987 report prepared by the Argentine State Intelligence Service, SIDE, on the subversive All for the Fatherland Movement (MTP). The report was delivered to the Alfonsín government. Portions of the report appeared in the Jan. 26 edition of the Buenos Aires daily Ambito Financiero.

Currently, the MTP is largely made up of elements which belonged to the ranks of the subversive People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), and to a lesser degree, of others who belonged to or collaborated with the Montoneros organization. A large number of those elements were freed in 1984 . . . after having been jailed in different prison units, and sentenced for their guerrilla activities, while others had returned to the country from exile. . . .

In many cases, MTP members use phrases and codes, or names and nicknames, similar to those used by armed organizations some years ago. MTP bases its actions in various parts of the country, relying on the corresponding responsible parties and "zones" . . .

Of the aforementioned individuals, it is worth noting that Francisco Provenzano, Carlos José Samojedni, and Fernando Dondero were ERP guerrillas, as were almost all of the MTP's representatives in the interior, while Manuel Justo Gaggero, the Burgos couple, ex-priests Dri and Serra . . . were members of or supported that and other subversive organizations. . . .

Another organization linked to the MTP is "Christian Encounter." . . . Said organization is involved in the development of "theology of liberation" and in the creation of a "people's church." . . . Christian Encounter . . . frequently organizes short "courses," in which it often uses videocassettes. This system has been adopted by the MTP . . . groups of workers are shown videos produced in Cuba on the Latin American foreign debt, which contain Fidel Castro's speech, or ones on the labor conference held in Havana; in the poor neighborhoods and marginal areas of Buenos Aires, videos produced in Nicaragua, of which the MTP possesses a number, are shown. Some of their titles are "History of an Armed People," "Cultural Insurrection," etc.

. . . MTP's contacts are fundamentally with Nicaragua.

First, Manuel Justo Gaggero frequently visits the Nicaraguan ambassador, Fernando Guzmán. Gaggero maintains close relations with members of the Sandinista leadership, some of whom recently visited Buenos Aires, such as Carlos Nuñez and Bayardo Arce, ties probably initiated when Gaggero resided in Managua prior to returning to the country from exile, in 1984.

In mid-August of 1986, Burgos traveled to Havana and Managua, in the latter city establishing contact with Hernán Invernizzi, ex-ERP member freed in May of 1986 and currently resident there. There is certain financial support for the MTP from Nicaragua, channeled through the commercial section of its embassy in Buenos Aires. According to estimates from some MTP members, said support will increase given that the MTP will be taking on new political projects this year. From Managua, the movement also receives videotapes on different aspects of Nicaraguan life. . . .

In mid-November of 1986, three members of the MTP traveled to Nicaragua, [a trip] which coincided with the anniversary of the creation of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). . . .

A Salvadoran citizen, Antonio Cabrera, also maintains close contacts with the MTP. He is the representative of the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front of El Salvador . . . Cabrera often exchanges experiences with the MTP regarding recruitment tasks, and often accompanies them in related activities, primarily in the southern region of Greater Buenos Aires, and participates in Christian Encounter meetings. He has about 15 videocassettes which he brought from his country, which are copied and distributed by MTP. Carlos Alberto Burgos and Marta F. Fernández also have ties to the Cuban embassy, particularly with one of its officers, Jesús Cruz. . . .

In terms of methodology . . . [the MTP] maintains a cellular structure and a code system which can be compared with those used by armed organizations. . . .

As for recruitment, it is important to note the importance given to the preservation of "historic memory," through which the guerrilla experience is justified. This activity is carried out at the level of secondary school youth, who . . . can be most susceptible to proposals of a combative nature.

Given these indications, the recruitment tasks which [the MTP] carries out, the levels to which they are directed, the material used, foreign support, and the predisposition demonstrated by a large portion of its membership—the MTP's inclination to participate more actively, in the coming year, in more frontal battles on behalf of [social, labor, freedom for "political prisoners"] demands, cannot be ruled out. . . .

For these indicated reasons, and added to this the degree of secrecy and clandestinity with which its members tend to carry out and/or develop some of their activities and meetings, it also cannot be ruled out that, if their interests so dictate, the MTP would consider an eventual return to armed struggle, having assimilated previous mistakes and past experiences.