

# Bush moves against Argentine military

by Peter Rush

Six weeks after taking office, Argentine President Saúl Carlos Menem faces a political brawl over how to resolve the nation's five-year-old military crisis—at a moment when leftist insurgents are taking advantage of severe economic troubles to threaten social chaos.

The military crisis deepened with the resignation on Aug. 16 of Humberto Romero, the number-two man in the Defense Ministry, and persistent reports that President Menem has decided to retire around 30 nationalist officers, including Col. Mohamed Ali Seineldín, for whom Romero was considered a spokesman.

Seineldín is backed by the majority of officers and enlisted ranks, ever since he led a military action last December that won pay increases for the army, and promises of eventual amnesty for about 20 officers now in jail or under indictment for crimes allegedly committed during an anti-subversive campaign in the late 1970s. Seineldín, a strong anti-Communist, has been a hero in Argentina since the 1982 Malvinas War, and internationally admired by anti-Bolshevik resistance fighters ever since his courageous December action. But he is hated by a liberal clique of generals, and by social democratic and some Peronist politicians in the country—not to mention the Bush administration, which has brazenly demanded that Seineldín be cashiered.

The State Department, acting on behalf of President Bush, sent Menem a message saying that Seineldín would have to be eliminated from the army if Argentina was to receive political support from the United States. Seineldín's presence in the army would destabilize democracy and lead to instability which would impede good U.S.-Argentine relations, U.S. Ambassador Terrence Todman informed Menem. Menem was warned that if Seineldín stayed in the army, he would become the "Noriega of Argentina," and that Menem himself would "become a puppet like [Panamanian President] Manuel Solís Palma."

This crude message is rather dramatic confirmation that U.S. efforts to overthrow Panamanian Defense Forces commander Gen. Manuel Noriega, are just a warmup for eliminating *all* of South America's nationalist military leaders; apparently they disrupt the power-sharing deals being made with Gorbachov's Soviet Union.

The fear that the U.S. would treat Argentina like Panama—which has been hit hard by economic sanctions and military threats—may account for the apparent reversal of

Menem's decision, announced by Defense Minister Italo Luder in a July 30 radio interview, to dismiss all charges of insubordination against Seineldín and his colleagues and restore them to their army commands.

Also opposing Seineldín are the Bunge and Born grain cartel and former Bunge executive Nestor Rapanelli, now finance minister. They are insisting to Menem that the presence of "fundamentalists" in the army (a slur on Seineldín's Christian faith) would destroy Argentina's credibility abroad, and that there would consequently be no support for Menem's economic program. Without that, they say, the program—and the government—will founder.

But as of this writing, Menem has not made public his decision on Seineldín. When Menem's defeated Peronist party rival for the presidency and leader of the so-called "Renewal" faction of Peronism, Buenos Aires Gov. Antonio Cafiero, visited Menem around Aug. 15, reportedly to pressure him to dump Seineldín, Menem angrily threw Cafiero out of his office. In the army itself, one colonel and three majors who had backed Seineldín ally Lt. Col. Aldo Rico in earlier military actions, were ordered reinstated, the *Financial Times* of London reported Aug. 18.

## Left subversive danger grows

Inflation has fallen from 197% in July to 30% in August, but Argentina's economic depression continues to worsen. Labor groups report that unemployment is at 21% and rising, wages are still well below even minimal subsistence levels for millions of people, and hunger and malnutrition are severe. The government has begun a number of programs to provide food, and in some case medicines, to the poorest people, but the government treasury is empty, and the measures so far are not nearly adequate. A social explosion is only a matter of time, and leftist subversive groups that intend to exploit that explosion are proliferating.

Intelligence-linked sources in Buenos Aires have reported to *EIR* that the subversives have set up an impressive infrastructure of cells and propaganda dissemination. Some of these groups are linked to foreign terrorists, like Peru's unspeakably savage Shining Path. These groups are putting into place the basis for provoking and leading the most desperate Argentines in lootings and uprisings, such as occurred in the city of Rosario in late May. This time, it will be far worse.

The two largest groups, All for the Fatherland Movement (MTP) and People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), staged a simulated "mass insurrection" in the town of Morena at the end of July. Four hundred slum dwellers joined with about 1,100 leftists in a looting spree. The insurgents organized themselves into "combat units," and used sophisticated equipment. Representatives of leftist groups held a series of regional meetings in July to practice urban guerrilla tactics. If the Argentine military faces this crisis disarmed and demoralized, Moscow can thank George Bush.