

Argentina threatened with dismemberment

by Cynthia R. Rush

When on July 8, the governor of the Argentine province of Rio Negro, Hugo Massaccesi, transferred \$16 million from the central bank in Buenos Aires to its branch in his province and used the funds to pay 30,000 state workers, he unleashed a political storm. President Carlos Menem branded him a traitor and threatened to prosecute the entire provincial legislature for backing him. Immediately, other governors, while publicly attacking Massaccesi for his "irresponsible" action, began voicing their complaints against the government in Buenos Aires, and demanded more equitable treatment in the form of more federal revenues, payment of oil royalties, and other financial support owed them by the federal government.

Argentina is just a few months away from mid-term elections, and both the ruling Peronists and the opposition Radical Civic Union are involved in a good deal of political maneuvering. But what's going on here is something far more dangerous than just political squabbling or interparty rivalry. Menem may have obediently applied the Anglo-American establishment's policies in his country, but he hasn't entirely eliminated the nationalist resistance within the Armed Forces, trade union movement, or population at large, which remains an obstacle to the successful imposition of George Bush's new world order.

In the early 19th century, British and French military might, allied with Giuseppe Mazzini's freemasons inside the Young Argentina movement, tried to physically dismember the Argentine Confederation in order to impose British free trade policies and crush the forces associated with nationalist Juan Manuel de Rosas, who ruled Argentina from 1828 to 1853. Beginning in 1828, with the creation through British intrigue of the "nation" of Uruguay, these forces repeatedly separated off pieces of the national territory, declared the creation of new states, and even offered portions of the nation to their allies, or to European princes, if this would subdue the defenders of national sovereignty. This Mazzinian movement was committed to eradicating the principles underlying Western Christian civilization.

The 'strong state' disappears

Today, the Anglo-Americans are prepared to attempt again the dismemberment of the country. One ominous sign was the report in the July 15 *Newsweek* in which Henry

Kissinger is quoted saying that Argentina "is a dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica." Kissinger's message is that the nation represents a threat to Anglo-American interests in Antarctica, which are considerable, and must therefore be ripped apart. In the early 1950s, under the government of Gen. Juan Perón, Argentina's nationalist military performed valuable scientific work in Antarctica, which strengthened the country's territorial claims to that region.

As the example of the 1982 Malvinas War demonstrates, the Anglo-Americans have no intention of tolerating Argentine claims to resource-rich Antarctica, particularly if they come from a nationalist military intent on defending sovereignty. Chile, which came to Britain's aid in 1982 against Argentina, is prepared to play that role again. Britain has used elements in the Chilean Armed Forces to aggravate Chilean-Argentine border disputes, and has on the back burner the option of a full-scale war between the two nations, whose purpose would be to crush Argentina and what remains of its decimated Armed Forces.

The dismemberment strategy is also assisted by the fact that especially over the last 10 years, application of International Monetary Fund austerity policy has accelerated the country's institutional breakdown. In order to survive, individual provinces have resorted to creating their own currencies and carrying out their own foreign policy, as if unattached to a central government.

It's no accident that press commentary on the current crisis uses Yugoslavia as a reference point, and notes that some Argentine governors have already begun talking about the desirability of seceding and forming separate nations. In an article published in the daily *Ambito Financiero* July 15, commentator Ignacio Zuleta reported that in private conversation, many businessmen and politicians in the "rich" oil-producing provinces of Patagonia admit that "if they were a nation apart, with control over their natural resources . . . they could function much better . . . and stop having to subsidize Buenos Aires." Similar sentiment can be found in the northwestern and northeastern provinces, Zuleta reports, where those governments feel they could benefit by annexing themselves to neighboring countries, rather than being "oppressed" by the central government in Buenos Aires.

Most significant is Zuleta's assertion that this separatist discussion is being driven by the fact that the concept of the nation-state no longer really exists, especially given the end of the Cold War. He attributes this development to the spread of free market economics, with its orgy of privatization and deregulation which denigrates the role of the state. "Without communism," he adds, "and with an American Empire with which all must be negotiated, tribalisms—both European and American—are strengthened, and base themselves on what they consider to be their competitive advantages: resources, common interests, natural borders [defined by] language and geography. Politics declines in importance, almost disappearing, for the moment."