

São Paulo allies scramble in Argentina

by Roberto Rodríguez

Leaders of Argentina's leftist electoral coalition, the Broad Front (Frente Grande), are nervous about the recent defeats suffered in several Ibero-American nations by their allies in Fidel Castro's narco-terrorist alliance, the São Paulo Forum. Following elections in Venezuela and Mexico, where the electorate voted for institutional stability rather than the destabilization and violence offered them by Forum-linked candidates, the Broad Front's presidential hopeful, Carlos "Chacho" Alvarez, who expects to run against President Carlos Menem in 1995, announced that he "was never a leftist."

His model, he said, isn't Brazil's Luís Inacio da Silva—a founder of the São Paulo Forum and presidential candidate of the Workers' Party (PT) for that country's October elections—but rather Chile. Earlier this year, Alvarez had boasted that his movement could be similar to Brazil's PT, and he met with PT leaders.

What Peronist "dissident" Alvarez means by the Chilean model is a "democratic and pluralist" coalition similar to that which put current Chilean President Eduardo Frei in power. Member groups disagree on secondary matters, but agree on one crucial issue: the need for economic liberalism (another name for British free trade and austerity). The Broad Front's "Chilean" project came into being on Aug. 8, when Alvarez consummated his long courtship with Radical Party social democrat Federico Storani and former Mendoza governor and Inter-American Dialogue member José Octavio Bordón. All of these figures have cultivated their images as socially conscious, anti-corruption leaders who oppose the status quo within their own parties. Bordón recently resigned his position as a senator, underscoring that he was not leaving the tradition of Argentina's former President Juan Perón, founder of the Peronist mass movement, which has traditionally been nationalist in its outlook, but was only leaving Peronism's "Menemist" current.

A motley crew

The Broad Front is a motley crew of communists, Christian Democrats, Christians, socialists, and former officials of the 1976-83 military government. There are even rumors that Menem's former Interior Minister Gustavo Béliz, an advocate of the pseudo-Catholic theories of American Michael Novak, who left office over a year ago because he opposed corruption within the government, may officially join the Front. The weekly intelligence newspaper *El In-*

formador Público reported recently that journalist Mariano Grondona, a Henry Kissinger intimate who poses as a Catholic theoretician, may be a candidate on a Broad Front ticket to offer an image of "undeniable morality and capability."

As the London *Financial Times* indicated earlier this year, Carlos Menem is definitely expendable as Argentina's President. Bordón has said that he wants to put an end to the "Menem dynasty," while earlier this year, Storani charged that Menem was "like Mexico's PRI," that country's ruling party. These phrases are simply the codewords for the São Paulo Forum's offensive to destroy the institutions of the nation-state—the church, the Armed Forces, a strong presidency—and replace them with ethnic violence, ecologism, and civil war. No matter how well Menem has imposed foreign dictates, to the degree that he and his Peronists are in any way identified with institutional stability, they have to be swept away, in the view of the British gamemasters.

Alvarez's conversion

On Aug. 5, Alvarez inaugurated his own foundation, the Center for Programmatic Studies, and announced the Broad Front's economic program. In the months following the coalition's electoral victory last April, there had been considerable speculation over the nature of the Front's economic policies, especially from the more recalcitrant free-trade advocates such as conservative leader Alvaro Alsogaray. In statements issued Aug. 5, Alsogaray asked, "What is the Grand Front's platform. . . ? Alvarez is a wolf in sheep's clothing; what is his program?"

Alsogaray needn't have worried. What Alvarez presented was the same neo-liberal program of Finance Minister Domingo Cavallo—with a few phrases thrown in about "social needs." The architects of the program include economist Daniel Novak, who formerly worked for José Martínez de Hoz, finance minister of the 1976-83 military junta; and Arnaldo Bocco, a New York University-trained economist who worked for many years as a consultant to the Inter-American Development Bank and the Canadian government. Argentina's liberal establishment gave the Front's program its blessing. It couldn't have asked for anything better: a program that united the principles of government neo-liberalism with the neo-liberal "opposition."

The Broad Front's program is a reaffirmation of Cavallo's "convertibility program," which places the peso on a one-to-one relationship with the dollar, and emphasizes austerity. Echoing themes discussed by International Monetary Fund Managing Director Michel Camdessus during a recent visit to Buenos Aires, the plan speaks of extending more credit, improving competitiveness and productivity, but says nothing about the wages or real production required to stimulate the internal market and exports.

As British-linked geopolitician Jorge Castro put it in the Aug. 7 *El Cronista*, "What is truly important is that the government and the main opposition force share the same economic culture in today's Argentina."