

OAS hammers at Argentine military

by Cynthia R. Rush

In its annual report published early this year, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, an entity which functions under the aegis of the Organization of American States (OAS), virtually demanded that the government of Argentina revoke amnesties granted in the late 1980s to military personnel accused of human rights violations in the 1970s war against communist subversion. Amnesties approved during the government of Raul Alfonsín (1983-89) and of his successor Carlos Saul Menem were "incompatible" with human rights conventions signed by Argentina's government, the Commission asserted. It made a similar point regarding amnesties approved by the Uruguayan and El Salvadoran governments.

The OAS-sponsored Commission has no authority to enforce such a demand, but the weight of its recommendation has already borne fruit in the June decision of two Argentine judges to annul the "due obedience" law for two former Army captains accused of kidnapping businessman Osvaldo Sivak in 1979. Although that law states that officers accused of human rights violations could not be prosecuted because they were following their superiors' orders, two federal judges ruled that it was not applicable in this case, and issued arrest warrants for former officers Rafael López Fader and Roberto Guillermo Fossa.

The court ruling is important because it takes the Anglo-American establishment a step closer to a wholesale assault on the *institution* of the Armed Forces. Last March, discussing the case of El Salvador, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher implied that his country would attempt to try El Salvadoran officers in international courts for alleged war crimes, adding that it would be necessary to find a way around the amnesty which has been approved by the El Salvadoran National Assembly.

The Argentine judges' ruling sets a precedent for a broader revocation of amnesties in cases where "new evidence" of human rights violations is discovered. The two will be prosecuted in Argentine courts, but the Anglo-American goal is ultimately to establish the jurisdiction of international courts in these cases as a means of limiting national sovereignty and imposing the rule of non-governmental organizations under the guise of defending human rights.

In Chile, for example, the Pinochet government approved

an amnesty law in 1978; but today several hundred older, unresolved human rights cases involving military officers are still pending in the courts. The Aylwin government's policy of "reinterpreting" the 1978 amnesty law, thus opening the door to human rights lobbyists who want new prosecutions of military personnel, has caused considerable unrest among the Armed Forces. This was one of the reasons for the public show of military force in downtown Santiago on May 29.

Groups such as the Family Members of Detained and Disappeared are threatening to take cases to international courts if their grievances aren't redressed at home. Magdalena Navarrete, a Chilean activist whose son belonged to the terrorist MIR group and was arrested and killed in 1974, told the daily *El Mercurio*, "if impunity is established in Chile, we are prepared to go to all international agencies to press our cause."

Terrorists demand 'rights'

Over the last six months, the international human rights lobby and its network of terrorist supporters have sounded the drumbeat for the anti-military offensive, particularly in the nations of the Southern Cone. The December 1992 discovery of secret police files in Asunción, Paraguay, which reportedly include evidence of how military and police services in five countries collaborated to combat terrorism under the code-name Operation Condor, provided the impetus for an international media campaign which carped about the existence of a "Nazi-like" network of "state-sponsored terrorism" and publicized demands for new trials of military officers.

It is instructive to examine the pedigrees of those individuals who have been most vociferous in their accusations against the Armed Forces. In early June in Argentina, Socialist deputy Alfredo Bravo joined with six other deputies to demand a congressional investigation of visitors to the Magdalena prison where Army nationalist Col. Mohamed Alí Seineldín is jailed. The deputies charged that Seineldín was organizing a political movement which threatened democracy, and complained that he and other military prisoners enjoyed excessive privileges. Bravo, who works closely with the U.S. embassy, also retailed slanders from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith claiming that U.S. political prisoner Lyndon H. LaRouche was financing Seineldín's new movement.

The deputies' alleged concern for "democracy" is belied by a report in the July 2 *El Informador Público*, which reveals that Bravo and his cohorts are demanding amnesty for jailed members of the All for the Fatherland Movement (MTP), the terrorist group which assaulted the La Tablada Army base in January 1989. With foreign assistance, the deputies have succeeded in obtaining unprecedented jail privileges for the MTPers, many of whom once belonged to the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), one of the armed terrorist groups active during the 1970s.