

fluids that contain the virus, such as tears or saliva, is conceivable when these come into contact with mucous membranes or open wounds. What is not clear is the question of whether transmission can result from coughing. . . . It must always be borne in mind that, in view of the insufficient information on HIV infection, most statements are still subject to new scientific findings. Above all, it should be not be forgotten that no positive conclusions can be drawn from negative discoveries. A contact by means of which, according to all that is presently known, a risk cannot be excluded does not become risk-free through the fact that, up to this point, no case of a transmission is documented. The formula 'No case proven' creates a possibly tragic, deceptive security."

**HIV testing.** "Testing has a preventive potential, on the one hand, as a result of the fact that those who know that they are a source of danger will, as shown by experience, behave differently from those who know only that they could be a source of danger. On the other hand, the knowledge that an individual is infected leads obviously to the question of where he became infected. Here is an important beginning for contact tracing. . . . If the pros and cons are considered, the point of view advocating testing prevails, especially if we follow the maxim that each additional infection is one infection too many. The concerns of those who oppose testing can be addressed through appropriate education and counseling of those tested, when there is no alternative of equal value for avoiding further infections in individual cases."

**Legal obligations.** "The general civil and penal obligation exists for those in risk groups or for infected individuals not to harm anyone's health. Additionally, supplementation of the Federal Epidemic Law or the mandate to a specific AIDS law seems unavoidable. . . . What needs to be investigated is, among other things, whether behavioral standards are created by force of law, for example, the legal obligation to use condoms for those who frequent prostitutes and those who are infected, the legal obligation for those who are infected to inform their partner when behavior involving a risk contact is involved. Individuals with sufficient reason to believe that they represent a concrete risk of infection for others are obligated, as a result: to make clear what their infectious condition is; to do the utmost to avoid what can lead to a transmission of the infection; to appropriately inform the contact partner in contacts involving risk. They are obligated to give information as far as possible on the relevant source of their infection as well as obligated to tolerate having the data concerning their infection passed on, insofar as this seems indicated for the avoidance of further infection."

**Protection for medical personnel.** "Even with the use of the utmost in hygienic care, medical aid personnel cannot sufficiently eliminate the risk of an infection; all precautions must be made to keep this risk as low as possible. For that, sufficient information of the risk in individual cases is necessary, and, consequently, information on whether a patient is infected."

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## Argentina

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# Alfonsín booed over IMF shock plan

by Cynthia Rush

Each August, the cream of Argentina's agricultural oligarchy joins other producers, government officials, and political leaders in the fashionable Palermo section of Buenos Aires to attend the annual agricultural exposition sponsored by the Rural Society. The exposition is one of the year's major social events, in which producers show off their prize cattle and livestock. As he has done each year for the past five years, President Raúl Alfonsín arrived on Aug. 13 to personally inaugurate the exposition, and use his speech to expound on his government's policies.

But this year, things were a little different. The ceremony which normally surrounds the President's appearance and inaugural speech was broken up by shouts of protest and waving of banners in the viewing stands which read "Alfonsín Liar." Protesters whistled and booed at Alfonsín's entourage, and interrupted his speech, as well as that of Agriculture Minister Ernesto Figueras. As one observer put it, "everything short of throwing tomatoes" was done. Members of the ruling Radical Civic Union (UCR), placed in the stands to support the President, then proceeded to interrupt the speech of Rural Society president Guillermo Alchouron.

The incident was unprecedented in the exposition's history, and scandalized the nation. Things turned particularly ugly when hecklers in the stands called Alfonsín a liar, and shouted that the country had been better off under the previous military dictatorship. Red-faced, the President called the protesters "fascists." Why the insults to the President and other public figures at such a prestigious event?

In its efforts to prove itself worthy of a \$1.3 billion standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund, Alfonsín's government has declared war against the agricultural sector and against the nation's entire productive apparatus and working population. The misnamed *Plan Primavera* or Spring Plan, the anti-inflationary shock program announced on Aug. 1, raised public utility rates by 30%, guarantees further contraction of domestic consumption by gouging

wages, and promises to "balance the books" by cutting state sector costs. The government's economic team, led by Finance Minister Juan V. Sourrouille, has promised the IMF that this plan will bring inflation, estimated at over 30% for August, down to a single digit by September.

The "quick fix" aspect of the plan is the indirect tax it imposes on the agricultural sector, in an effort to raise revenues that can be applied to the fiscal deficit as the IMF demands. Currently at close to 10% of GNP, the deficit must be lowered to 2 or 3% to be acceptable to the Fund. The plan's establishment of a two-tier exchange rate obliges agricultural exporters to liquidate the foreign exchange they earn at 12 australs to the dollar. The Central Bank then sells those same dollars on the open market for 14 australs each, appropriating immediately almost \$1.4 billion. In the first few days of the Spring Plan, the Central Bank reported that it had garnered over \$2 billion in free dollar reserves.

### **Battering production**

Leaders of Argentina's agricultural sector argue that they, and not the "privileged" industrial sector, have been singled out to bear the brunt of the new anti-inflationary plan. While the newly imposed indirect tax quickly fills the Central Bank's coffers with funds from the agro sector, offsetting the windfall they expected as a result of the U.S. drought, the new measures will leave every sector of the economy, particularly consumers, in a decidedly unprivileged position.

Thus far, a faction of the national Argentine Industrial Union (UIA) has offered lukewarm support for the plan; but the alliance of the 17 largest business associations, known as the "G-17," is rife with dissension over the plan's measures and threatens to break apart. New measures which oblige importers to purchase dollars at the higher financial exchange rate raise the cost of imports by 30%. With an import bill of \$5 billion annually, the industrial sector will be hit particularly hard. The agricultural sector's annual import bill is \$600 million.

The combination of the exorbitant cost of credit, monthly inflation rates hovering around 25 to 30%, the continual increase in public utility and fuel costs over the past year, and now a ceiling on prices, has meant that the industrial sector grew by only 0.3% for the first quarter of this year.

Government officials admit that the Spring Plan's success depends on the working population accepting wage gouging and lower consumption. The finance ministry has made it clear to the nation's trade union leadership that they must not expect to recuperate lost purchasing power, but rather adjust wage demands to the lower inflation rates expected for September.

The past months' inflation, 60% for July and August alone, has eaten away at purchasing power, such that August wages are now 22% below the 1987 average. Real wages have dropped 40% since January of 1984. A 25% wage increase granted to state-sector workers at the end of July has

been made virtually meaningless by inflation. In the ten-day period between July 27 and Aug. 8, the prices of 55 key food and supermarket items rose by 50%; and over a period of a month-and-a-half, beginning at the end of June, the price of butter rose by 115%, eggs by 70%, and flour by 125%. And, in anticipation of price controls, many businesses engaged in a significant mark-up of their products both before and after the Spring Plan's announcement.

### **Where's the beef?**

Alfonsín's reward for further gutting both production and living standards, is supposed to be a \$1.3 billion standby loan from the IMF, and additional fresh funds from U.S. and foreign commercial banks. But for all its bowing and scraping before the banks, the government has yet to see a penny of new money.

After Central Bank president Luis Machinea and finance ministry official Mario Brodersohn carried out frantic negotiations in Washington at the end of July, the IMF reportedly gave the okay for the new standby. But at the last minute, the word was that the Fund wanted to see "how the Spring Plan worked before we release a single dollar."

Now Brodersohn must return to Washington in early September to negotiate with the Fund once again, in the hopes that a standby agreement will encourage commercial banks to hand over \$3.5 billion in additional funds. However, it will be late November or early December before any new IMF money reaches Argentina. Finance ministry officials hope to use a \$500 million bridge loan from the U.S. Treasury to meet interest payments on its \$55 billion foreign debt. Argentina must make a \$400 million interest payment by Aug. 26.

In the meantime, the population is not in a very tolerant mood. Following the announcement of the new measures, leaders of the four major agricultural organizations announced a series of national actions beginning on Aug. 22 and 23 to protest "discrimination" against the sector. During these mobilizations, producers will not market any agricultural products.

The Argentine Industrial Council (CAI), representing small and medium-sized industry, has issued a call to convene local and sectorial assemblies to protest the economic measures. The crisis, CAI says, originates in the fact that the government "does not contemplate with these measures a policy of growth which encourages and rewards the generation of resources."

Strikes over wage demands are widespread, and there is no indication that unions intend to limit their wage demands as the government desires. The powerful Metallurgical Workers Union (UOM) just negotiated a 47% wage increase with the industry's leaders; and the Peronist-led General Confederation of Labor (CGT) has announced a general strike for Sept. 9, in defense of wages and living standards and to protest price mark-ups and utility rate increases.