

A snub by the United States

Washington and London are all but ignoring the economic crisis in Central and Eastern Europe, relegating these countries to the status of "buffer states." This was underscored at a conference in The Hague just a few days before the NATO meeting. The May 22-23 meeting on Parliamentary Democracy and International Security Policy, sponsored by Netherlands Foreign Minister Henri Van den Broek and the Netherlands Atlantic Commission, gathered parliamentarians and experts from Western and Eastern Europe, as well as the Soviet Union. Although U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.), and Rep. Charles Rose (D-N.C.) were invited, all three canceled out. Only U.S. Ambassador to NATO William Howard Taft IV attended, giving a speech that conspicuously avoided any hint of U.S. policy concerning the vital question on the agenda.

The Americans' absence was the more striking, considering the support the Dutch foreign minister has given the Bush administration during the Gulf crisis and the current security debate in Europe. The other imperialist powers which have joined the United States in forcing an "out-of-area" role for NATO on a reluctant continental Europe—Great Britain and France—were also absent.

The economic crisis facing Europe was underscored by the Eastern and Central European spokesmen on hand. Professor Brucan, a former Romanian ambassador to Washington, charged that Western aid to Eastern Europe has been a "big hoax." He warned that the economic crisis in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is the major threat to European security. Warning against turning the border between Eastern and Western Europe into a "Mexican border," with all its social, political, and economic implications, he declared that with a combined foreign debt of \$150 billion, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are paying \$10 billion annually in interest payments alone. This is while "Western aid and capital inflow can be only counted in the millions." He added, "NATO is not equipped to deal with this current threat."

Brucan's appeal was backed by Hungary's state secretary of the Foreign Ministry, Tamas Katona, who said that "every effort should be made to avoid a new Iron Curtain falling, this time dividing our continent along the welfare line. . . . There should be no place for a buffer zone in the new European security architecture, as the indivisibility of security should not remain a noble slogan, but kept in mind as an idea guiding our thinking."

Speaking privately, senior Dutch representatives bitterly told *EIR*, "If the Americans are deliberately snubbing us, it seems the only ones we can trust these days to be honest with us are the Germans." Rita Süßmuth, Speaker of the German Parliament, in open debate chastised those who saw the U.S.-led intervention into the Gulf as a great success for the alliance, since "it is not yet clear whether this Iraq war has benefited anyone as of yet."

Will Argentine military accept 'Condor' demise?

by Cynthia R. Rush

The Buenos Aires daily *Clarín* reported on May 29 that like, the legendary Incan King Tupac Amaru, "the Condor II missile will be drawn and quartered." The paper was referring to the announcement one day earlier by Defense Minister Erman González that all of the elements in the Argentine Air Force's controversial missile project must be "deactivated, dismantled, reconverted and/or rendered unusable, as per the possibilities of use in peaceful applications."

After months of pressure from the United States, and despite strong resistance from within the Armed Forces, the Menem government made the final decision to destroy the intermediate-range Condor II missile, initiated in 1985 in conjunction with the governments of Egypt and Iraq. The Bush administration has made the missile project's elimination a condition of "improved" relations with Argentina. To comply, Menem approved taking the Condor project out of the hands of the Air Force, where it was run through the National Space Research Commission, and placing it under the jurisdiction of the presidency and its new entity, the National Space Affairs Commission. As *Clarín* pointed out on May 26, "the change has clear political significance: placing the missile in civilian hands is a guarantee that the orders for destruction will be carried out." What's involved here is not just a change of name, the paper continued, but "an operation with political aims [which are] both internal and external."

Will the Air Force, and its backers in other branches of the Armed Forces, go along with the policy? This remains to be seen. The crisis within the institution is acute, as a result of International Monetary Fund (IMF) policy which mandates reducing the defense budget, as well as the size of the Armed Forces. On the same day that he announced the killing of the Condor II, Erman González also announced that the military and its civilian support personnel would be cut by more than 20,000. Currently there are 70,000 men in uniform.

The defense minister added that Argentina would shortly be signing the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the international treaty arrangement set up in 1987 to limit the development and transfer of missile technology,

especially among developing sector countries. Until now, the Argentine government had refused to join the MTCR, on the grounds that it was “discriminatory.”

Armed Forces the target

The Condor II project is a symbol of the best tradition within Argentina’s Armed Forces: its involvement in scientific and technological projects whose spinoffs positively affect the development of civilian industry and the economy overall. It is this tradition which the Anglo-American establishment is determined to annihilate in the process of creating Bush’s “new world order.” In an article published in the May 30 *Página 12*, Congressman Juan José Casella of the opposition Radical Civic Union (UCR) correctly pointed out that by demanding the Condor’s elimination, the U.S. is also denying Argentina the right to make use of its other, civilian applications, all of which are “vital for the country’s future.” Casella put his finger on Bush’s policy of technological apartheid when he noted that such a policy represents a “new division of power in the world,” between those who have technology and those who don’t.

At the urging of U.S. Ambassador Terence Todman, Finance Minister Domingo Cavallo and Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella have acted obediently to implement Anglo-American policy. The British-trained Di Tella repeatedly lied that “the missile is an apparatus that has military potential . . . it was made for that, and for nothing else.” The minister raved that the missile project had provoked “great concern” among the “international alliance” of the U.S., Japan, and the European Community (EC).

Many in the Air Force feel that the assault on the Condor is the final straw, however. Brig. Ernesto Crespo, head of the Air Force under President Raúl Alfonsín, (1983-89), reflected this in an interview published in the May 18 issue of *Página 12*. Earlier, he had charged that by acceding to U.S. pressures on the Condor, Argentina was becoming “a banana republic.” He told *Página 12*: “I haven’t attacked the military institution, nor republican institutions . . . but I think it is a deplorable country which allows foreigners to come in and control what we do or don’t do. That’s what I said.” Although under house arrest because of his earlier statements, Crespo risked further sanctions by saying that “I think U.S. interference in our internal affairs has gone too far.” Directly referencing Di Tella’s behavior, he added that “I think it is an outrage for a foreign minister to say that it’s all right for the U.S. to act as the gendarme of the world.”

Regional goals

The assault on the Condor II and on Argentina’s Armed Forces is part of the broader Bush administration policy for the entire continent. As is being discussed at the meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS), which began on June 3 in Santiago de Chile, the administration’s Enter-

prise for the Americas “integration” scheme—based on free trade and neo-liberal “structural reform”—cannot abide the existence of armed forces in any country which maintain a commitment to the defense of national sovereignty. Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez is one of the loudest proponents of leaving behind “archaic” principles such as national sovereignty and “non-intervention,” and embracing new regional security mechanisms.

The Buenos Aires daily *Ambito Financiero* reported bluntly on May 31 that the existence of the Armed Forces is actually an *obstacle* to the Bush policy of creating regional economic blocs to permit Ibero-American nations to increase their trade with the U.S. Therefore, *Ambito* said, “What is required now is a total reorganization of the Armed Forces to guarantee democracy, and to move forward in eliminating borders.” A key part of that reorganization is the plan to deploy the military to fight drugs, on a regional basis, it reported, adding that the presence of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in the Southern Cone “has been one of the most formidable elements of U.S. diplomatic, economic, political and moral pressure in Latin America.”

Noting that the U.S. goal at the OAS meeting is to devise new regional security mechanisms which are “coherent with democracy,” the same daily reported on May 31 that the Bush administration is worried that recent displays of unrest within the Argentine and Brazilian armed forces could prevent successful implementation of this agenda. Claims by Argentine and Brazilian military leaders that austerity policies have dismembered their institutions and left their countries “defenseless,” make Washington very nervous. In all of Ibero-America, it is the Argentine and Brazilian military institutions which have been most strongly committed to the doctrine that economic, industrial, and technological development is a matter of national security.

Argentine military resistance to Anglo-American policy is intensified by the fact that neighboring Chile is apparently an exception to the U.S. demand for regional disarmament. Only 24 hours after Defense Minister Erman González announced plans to destroy the Condor II and reduce the size of the Armed Forces, the directors of Chile’s Army holding company, FAMAL, held a public press conference to display an impressive arsenal of weapons, allegedly for sale abroad. This included a presentation of the short-range Ray missile, built jointly by the Chilean Army and the British Royal Ordnance Co.

Britain and Chile have allied historically against Argentina, most recently during the 1982 Malvinas War, and Argentine military leaders have no doubts that the neighboring country would lend itself again to any Anglo-American plan to provoke a war between the two on behalf of a new “regional order.” Argentine-Chilean border incidents, and recent Chilean police attacks on Argentine soccer fans attending a game in Santiago, are a worrisome sign of what the Anglo-Americans may be planning.