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CONGRESS EXPECTED TO ACT TO REIMPOSE ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST ARGENTINA

--Worldwide Move to Cut Off Weapons to Galtieri Government

--U.S. Labor Unions Expected to Reject Calls by Argentine Labor to Pressure Reagan Administration in Favor of Falkland Action

Congress is expected to move to reimpose the arms embargo against Argentina which was removed in December 1981 after heavy pressure was exercised by the Reagan administration. The embargo was first placed against Argentina in September 1978. At that time, President Carter implemented legislation that had been passed by a Congress concerned with the high levels of human rights violations of the Argentine military government that had seized power in 1976.

According to a COHA poll of key Congressional staffers, the House of Representatives will be the first to act, and will do so shortly after its members return from their Easter recess on April 13. The Senate is expected to take action shortly afterwards. There is a strong likelihood that a sense of Congress resolution will be the first to pass, with a specific amendment to pending foreign aid legislation shortly afterward to make congressional intent binding. Even a non-binding resolution would have a significant impact on the President's freedom of action toward Argentina. Up to this point, the administration has scheduled only \$50,000 in military training funds to Argentina.

Even before the Reagan administration was inaugurated, its representatives traveled to Argentina in an effort to repair relations with Buenos Aires. Such an improvement became one of the main goals of Washington's new Latin American policy. Gen. Vernon Walters, Senator Howard Baker, U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Thomas Enders, and a score of admirals, generals, and State Department officials made the trip to Argentina, all calling for more intimate relations between the two countries. This action was taken in spite of the clearly articulated position expressed by Argentine officials that the warm relations that Buenos Aires had established with the Soviet Union were non-negotiable.

The move by Congress to cut off arms supplies to the Argentine government will come against a backdrop of actions taken by other countries. Canada has withdrawn its ambassador to Buenos Aires, announced that no arms will be sold to Argentina and that economic actions may also be taken. Similar steps have been taken, or are about to be taken, by Holland, France, and West Germany, with many more nations to follow. Argentina is thought to have a well-stocked armory as a result of a 1977-1979 arms-buying spree after a flare-up in the Beagle Channel dispute with Chile.

Trade Union Developments

In a related development, key leaders of the U.S. trade union movement, many of whom are members of COHA's board of trustees, are expecting their Argentine colleagues to request that they press the Reagan administration to oppose any British military action and to recommend that U.S. diplomatic leverage be used to predicate any negotiated settlement on recognition of Argentine sovereignty over the Falklands.

COHA has discussed these anticipated requests with trade union sources, and has learned that the bulk of U.S. labor will reject such appeals. Ironically, the U.S. trade union movement was ready to augment its traditional support of the Argentine labor movement, which only last week was preparing to conduct a nationwide strike to protest continuing restrictions on organized labor and plummeting standards of living.

U.S. trade union leaders are known to believe that their Argentine colleagues are making a great mistake in joining the patriotic fervor now gripping the nation over the Falkland Islands. Argentine trade unions played a key role in the organization of the euphoric demonstrations which took place in Buenos Aires' Plaza de Mayo on April 2. Labor leaders have since issued calls for their membership to back the annexation, and some have even offered the use of their offices as military recruitment centers. U.S. trade unions suspect that the Falklands invasion was launched specifically to distract labor from forcing its demands. The current conduct of the Argentine trade unions may only more deeply entrench the military government and make it more difficult for civilian political parties to regain power.

According to COHA inquiries, important U.S. trade union leaders are disheartened by the recent actions of Argentina's labor and political party leaders. As one AFL-CIO official said, "They are up to their old tricks of substituting opportunism for leadership, and rolling over in front of the military. While it's a shocking abdication of responsibility, we're used to this. One of the reasons that Argentina hasn't gone anywhere in the last 50 years is that the good people have been killed by the military while the second-raters are always ready to compromise principles for whistles in the dark."

Sources told COHA that Moravian church officials in Nicaragua are privately much more critical of the Sandinistas' handling of the border situation, but still decidedly support the government.

- Roger Wilkins, a former assistant U.S. Attorney General and editorial board member of the Washington Post, New York Times and Washington Star, visited the relocation camps of the Moskito Indians while on a fact-finding tour to which Will made pointed and demeaning reference in his thesis on Miskito genocide. Wilkins told COHA that, although the camps were places "where neither you nor I would want to live," the government nevertheless was meeting basic human needs, and that the people he encountered -- both refugees and officials -- were generally "friendly." His impression, he added, was that the government was intent on eventually providing them with an "extraordinary social services program."

- Most embarrassingly, the centerpiece of the Will article and part of the "circumstantial evidence" cited by Freedom House -- the photographs of burning bodies, published in Paris's conservative Le Figaro -- turned out to be bogus, taken four years ago by a Gamma photographer who said they depicted Red Cross workers disposing of corpses, victims of the revolutionary war.

- In discussing the Time version of the alleged Leimus massacre, de Zuniga related a meeting that she had with the representative of the UN High Commission on Refugees in charge of the refugee camps in Honduras for the Miskitos. "The Commission says that the 'bloodbath' did not take place. The Miskito people in Honduras, the Miskito organization in Honduras, have denied repeatedly that this took place. But it continues to be reported as having taken place," de Zuniga said.

More startling are accounts from Honduras received by COHA that the prime source for the Time article, Roberto Vidal Poveda, may have been kidnapped from his hospital bed in Tegucigalpa, where he was being treated for gunshot wounds, by elements of the DIN, the Honduran secret police. The supposition is that his remarks may have been prepared for him, especially in light of the discrepancies with the UN High Commission accounts.

As for Time's portrait of the Miskitos' history as "peaceful," only recently disrupted by the gratuitous and vicious evil of the Sandinistas, one need only refer to any of a number of authoritative texts on the subject to discover otherwise; that, as mentioned by the U.S. Moravian Church statement, conflict has been the norm rather than the exception between the Miskitos and the Pacific Coast population ever since the arrival of the Spanish. For brevity, consult an article in the Fall 1981 issue of Caribbean Review by Margaret Wilde, a piece Ms. Kirkpatrick, Mr. Will and Time should find instructive.

In addition to these third party accounts which debunk the massivity of the Sandinistas' rights violations as alleged by Kirkpatrick, et al, the Nicaraguan government has also invited the Inter-American Commission