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THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES IN SOCIETY

Summary

1. President Alfonsin has weakened the Armed Forces financially, imprisoned their former leaders and bought a degree of loyalty with the Due Obedience legislation. But the Armed Forces' demands continue and are unlikely to diminish following the crushing of the Rico rebellion. The Government's response is likely to be piece-meal. (paras 1-5)
2. British interests are probably best served by the unlikely development of a harmonious relationship between the Argentine Government and Armed Forces. But we must continue to oppose arms supplies which would threaten the Falklands. (paras 6-7)
3. A coup does not look imminent. Longer term, who can say? (paras 8-10)

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BRITISH INTERESTS SECTION

BUENOS AIRES

24 February 1988

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP  
LONDON

Sir

THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES IN SOCIETY

Introduction

1. The recently suppressed rebellion of Lt Col Aldo Rico has once more focussed the world's attention on the troubled relationship between President Alfonsin's Government and the Armed Forces. With a view to setting this latest development in context I enclose a paper prepared by my First Secretary, Mr Nigel Inkster, which describes the traditional role of the Armed Forces in Argentina, analyses their current attitudes and attempts a glimpse at the future.

The Problem

2. The Argentine Armed Forces (predominantly the Army) have willy-nilly been closely involved in the nation's political fortunes for well over a century. Their involvement intensified over the last fifty years. The twin impact of the Falklands debacle and the revelations of the excesses of the Dirty War shook the tradition: it is not safe to say it has been definitively broken.

The Radical Government's Response

3. It is easy to criticise President Alfonsin's handling of the Armed Forces in the last four years. But politics is the art of the possible and his achievements should not be underestimated. Members of the three juntas which ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1982 are behind bars. Alfonsin made a virtue of the necessity of Argentina's penury by slashing the military budget and vastly reducing the Army's manpower. Long before the now infamous events of Easter 1987 he had seen the necessity of setting a limit to human

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rights trials if the Armed Forces were to be reintegrated into society. And however distasteful the Due Obedience legislation which followed the Easter rebellion it ensured the loyalty of sufficient members of the Armed Forces to permit the successful suppression of Rico's later revolt.

#### The Present Situation

4. The Army Chief of Staff, General Jose Dante Caridi, has for the moment re-established a degree of control over the Army following the major splits dramatically revealed in 1987. Argentine democracy has emerged ostensibly strengthened. But the essential concerns of the Armed Forces remain. They want positive recognition of their achievement in eradicating terrorism, amnesty for those accused of civil rights abuses, a clearly defined role and (naturally) more money. The pressure on the government to tackle these issues is rendered no less by recent events. Indeed the victorious Caridi may well now argue from strength for the need for more rapid results.

5. Mr Inkster describes three broad options open to Alfonsin in his dealings with the Armed Forces: to conciliate, to repress or to drift. Save for total amnesty, which would seriously undermine Alfonsin's moral authority, the long-term interests of Argentine society at large would probably be best served by the first option. The second is in any case now scarcely possible. Knowing Argentina, the third seems most likely.

#### The British Interest

6. How much does any of this matter to us? The paramount British objective is to ensure that what happened in 1982 does not happen again. But we also wish to normalise our relationship with Argentina, both in support of this paramount objective and to advance British interests here. Supposing Alfonsin were able to crack the conundrum of restoring the prestige of the Armed Forces while remaining firmly in control, of defining their role satisfactorily and of finding the resources to enable them to develop into a truly professional force. The purely military threat to the Falklands might then increase. But the improved relationship between government and Armed Forces would militate against military adventure and a more secure civilian government would be better placed to countenance a modest normalisation of relations with the United Kingdom. (If, by contrast, the Armed Forces were wholly subdued and starved of resources the immediate military threat would remain low and the Armed Forces be, by definition, under civilian control. But this is the least likely scenario.) The most likely scenario of drift will inevitably bring further crises and the government will not wish to risk exacerbating matters by appearing to be soft towards Britain.

7. The prospects for a constructive development in Anglo-Argentine relations (and by extension for the security of the Falklands) would therefore appear best served by the relatively unlikely development of a satisfactory accommodation which would allow the Argentine

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Armed Forces to regain a respected place in society and enjoy a harmonious, but subordinate, relationship with the constitutionally-elected government. This most emphatically does not mean that we can agree with the Americans and our other allies that the Argentine Armed Forces should be allowed new and sophisticated weaponry in order to reconcile them to democracy. Elementary prudence dictates that we continue resolutely to oppose Argentine acquisition of any equipment which could conceivably be deployed against the Falklands (particularly as the Peronists, who may well form the next government, have yet to abandon the military option in their Falklands policy). But the long-term security of the Islands is not necessarily enhanced by the continuing existence of divided and embittered Armed Forces at odds with their own government. There is therefore a circle to be squared in our attitude towards developments in Argentina.

#### The Future

8. History helps explain why the Armed Forces constitute a problem in Argentine society. But history's other lesson is that it cannot tell us exactly what will happen next. The cross currents of conflicting loyalties and shifting political alliances (and the major role played by sheer opportunism) provide no basis for confident prognosis.

9. Subject to the standard caveat that anything can happen in Argentina one thing can be said with reasonable assurance. For all the undoubted nervousness created by the events of the last twelve months there is slender prospect of a serious attempt by the Armed Forces directly to intervene in the constitutional affairs of the State in the near future. People are weary of them. The major political parties, while far from ceasing to flirt with the various elements in the Armed Forces, see the democratic process as the best route to political power. The United States have invested a good deal of capital, political and financial, in support for Argentine democracy. And the Armed Forces themselves have no stomach for government at present. It would probably take a major deterioration in security or the economic and social situation to shift these constraints, particularly once the important milestone of the 1989 presidential elections has been successfully passed.

10. Such a development cannot, however be entirely ruled out in the longer term, particularly if neighbouring democracies also run into trouble and revert to military rule. Whether it can be avoided depends in part on the ability of Alfonsin, and his successors, to concentrate on the arduous and unglamorous task of making the economy work. But that, as they say, is another story.

11. I am copying this despatch and enclosures to Her Majesty's Ambassadors at Washington, Asuncion, Brasilia, La Paz, Montevideo, Santiago, to UKMIS New York, to the Governor of the Falkland Islands, to CBFFI and to the Ministry of Defence.

I am, Sir  
Yours faithfully

*Alan Hunt*

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## ARGENTINA: THE ARMED FORCES IN SOCIETY

Introduction

1. Argentina has just witnessed another in a long sequence of upheavals within its Armed Forces. This latest clash is the culmination of a period in which the military, disgraced following their repressive conduct in the war against subversion and their inept handling of the Falklands invasion, were struggling to regain what they saw as their rightful role in Argentine society. General Caridi's defeat of the "Young Turks" of the Rico group has averted a major crisis in civilian/military relations. It has also unequivocally restored the Armed Forces as a political pressure group in Argentine society, whose interests a civilian government can afford to neglect at their peril. The purpose of this study is to examine the Argentine Armed Forces as a political institution, providing a brief historical perspective but concentrating on the present, and attempting some educated guesses about how their role may develop. It does not attempt to analyse the military capabilities or describe the order of battle of the Argentine Armed Forces.

History

2. In political terms the history of the Argentine Armed Forces is, overwhelmingly, the history of the Army. The Air Force came into being only in 1947 and has tended to play a subordinate role. Although the origins of the Navy, like those of the Army, lie in the struggle for independence against Spain, the Navy has always been seen as the junior partner. Smaller and more cohesive, it has tended to function more as a professional and hence much less politicized force.

3. The army which created the Argentine Republic out of the Vice-Royalty of the River Plate in 1810 consisted of a small corpus of professional officers most of whom had, like San Martin himself, learned their trade with the Spanish Army in the Napoleonic Wars. The regular troops under their command were volunteers acting out of republican convictions. These were supplemented by gaucho bands raised and led by local caudillos. Argentina's first army did not survive the political disintegration which followed independence and until the mid-nineteenth century there was effectively no national army any more than there was a united Argentine nation. Provincial gaucho bands - the original montoneros - dominated this period of virtual civil war.

4. The next real national army was formed in 1865, at the start of the War of the Triple Alliance against Paraguay. On paper impressive, consisting of some 25,000 officers and men, its ranks were in fact made up of a sorry collection of the unemployed, criminals and pressed men and its officers enjoyed neither high levels of professional skill nor any great social prestige. Improvements to the officer corps began slowly, with the inauguration in 1870 of a military academy (Colegio Militar) for the training of officer cadets and a corresponding institute for the Navy (Colegio Naval). The need for a greater degree of professionalism was confirmed by perceived threats from Chile to Argentina's largely unsettled territory in Patagonia, and the consequent need to suppress

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and for all the Mapuche and Tehuelche Indians, who were the principal barrier to settlement there. This culminated in the Desert Campaign, conducted by one of Argentina's few truly great military leaders, Colonel Julio Roca. Subsequently, as Minister of War and later President, Roca oversaw a period in which the professionalism and social prestige of the Armed Forces reached unprecedented levels. This reached a peak in 1901, when the then Minister of War Pablo Ricchieri instituted universal conscription by lottery which forms the basis for the existing system of national service. This process of professionalisation had the effect of emphasising the distinction between the "military caste" of professional officers and the civilian populace as a whole. At the same time the Armed Forces acquired a new social prestige which made a military career attractive to new immigrants anxious for rapid social integration and advancement.

5. The Argentine Army was at this period dependent on both foreign weapons and foreign training. In 1900 a staff college (Escuela Superior de Guerra) was set up and run by a group of Prussian advisers. Strong German influence remained a feature of Argentine military training for the next forty years, barring a brief hiatus following the First World War. (The Navy on the other hand tended to follow the British naval tradition but to rely for both training and ships on the USA.) Following the fall of Peron, the Argentine Army began to look to the USA for both training and equipment, and most training manuals now in use in the Army are American, dating from the late nineteen sixties.

#### Present Organisation

6. At present the breakdown of the Argentine Armed Forces is as follows:

Army:	47,000, consisting of 20,000 officers and NCOs and 27,000 conscripts.
Navy:	27,000, consisting of 19,500 officers and NCOs and 7,500 conscripts (Navy conscripts serve two years, as opposed to one in the Army or Air Force)
Air Force:	12,000, consisting of 6,900 officers and NCOs and 5,100 conscripts.

These figures represent the lowest force levels in many years, roughly half those of the years of the military process of 1976-1983. They do not include either the Border Police (Gendarmeria Nacional) or the Coastguard (Prefectura Naval), separate institutions which nonetheless come under the control of the Defence Ministry. Nor do they include civilian employees of the three services, found in a wide range of installations controlled by the military since the 1940s including Fabricaciones Militares, the steel company SOMISA, the Domecq Garcia shipyards, the aerospace complex at Cordoba, the petrochemical complex at Bahia Blanca, the eleven military colleges (liceos militares) and even a chain of hotels run

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the Air Force. All, bar the petrochemical complex, are heavy loss makers and between them account for 40% of total defence expenditure.

7. Since 1984 all three services have come under a single Defence Ministry rather than, as previously, having a separate ministry for each. 1984 also saw the introduction of a Joint Chiefs of Staff (Estado Major Conjunto) supposedly to co-ordinate inter-service activities. But the Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff remains a relatively anonymous and powerless figure. And the reality is that (as was evident during the Falklands campaign) the three services have always tended to go their own separate ways. Each has its own schools, hospitals, logistics and supply systems and intelligence service (the latter now theoretically banned from activities in domestic politics). To the chagrin of the Air Force, both the Army and the Navy retain their own air arms. Inter-service communication, training and joint exercises remain at a minimum. And politically the differences between the services are significant.

#### Politics

8. Since their inception the Argentine Armed Forces have been pre-eminently a political force. This tradition was begun by San Martin who, while fighting for the Army of the Vice Royalty of the River Plate secretly organised the Lautaro Lodge (not apparently organised along Masonic lines) to promote the idea of national independence. Lodges have henceforth been a feature of Argentine military life, notable examples being the anti-Radical Logia San Martin in the mid-nineteen twenties, and the GOU (a lodge with vaguely mystic nationalist objectives) organised by Peron in the 1940s. In the twentieth century political divisions within the Army have been many: Radicals versus anti-Radicals, Axis supporters versus Allied supporters, liberals versus nationalists, Peronists versus anti-Peronists, Blues (supporters of a return to democracy after the overthrow of Frondizi) versus Reds (anti-Peronists favouring the retention of a military-backed regime). Efforts to bar serving military officers from involving themselves in politics, beginning in 1901 with the Ricchieri law, have had no effect. Argentina's history has frequently been one of governments imposed or formed by the Armed Forces.

9. A number of factors can be adduced to account for this degree of political involvement:

a. Custom. Since the 1860s the Argentine Army has been used to suppress internal disorders and to supervise elections (whose results were often fraudulently manipulated). A century later this internal role was justified in terms of the US-inspired Doctrine of National Security aimed at containing communist-inspired subversion in Latin America.

b. Indoctrination. Every new recruit to the military academy is taught that the Army founded the Argentine Republic and is hence responsible for safeguarding its "National Being" ("El Ser Nacional").

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c. Conditioning. Army officers spend much of their career in remote provincial garrisons, often involved in genuine development work such as bridge and road building and believe they are more in touch with national realities than the politicians.

10. It could be argued that a further factor is the absence of a serious external threat to occupy the attention of the Armed Forces - although they themselves perceive such threats as coming from Chile and Brazil (not to mention the Falklands garrison). Civilian governments too much take some share of the blame. In the 1920s soldiers with Radical sympathies enjoyed preferment. In Peron's time, good party credentials were the key to military advancement. After Peron, the reverse applied. And there has never been a successful coup d'etat in Argentina which did not enjoy a significant measure of civilian support, tacit or otherwise.

#### Effect of the Falklands War

11. A major determining factor in the present attitudes of the Armed Forces has been the Falklands war and its aftermath. It was the Navy, under Admiral Jorge Anaya, who conceived and promoted the actual invasion plan. But the Navy took virtually no part in the subsequent fighting, which was left to the Army and the Air Force. The former did not perform with much credit, and its organisational shortcomings and lack of proper training were revealed for all to see. The Air Force (and the Fleet Air Arm) performed with great credit, but at considerable cost in terms of manpower and machines.

12. Following the conflict, the Navy paradoxically found itself in a relatively strong position. Its professional reputation, if not exactly enhanced, had not greatly suffered. And having acquired much new equipment during the 1970s it was better able to weather the subsequent budget cuts than other forces. Politically the force reverted to its traditional low profile. Given its strong anti-Peronist tradition it probably found the Radicals slightly easier to live with. The Army crept back to barracks with its tail between its legs. Professionally its reputation had suffered considerably, it had lost a lot of equipment and subsequent budget cuts hit it where it hurt most, ie by forcing reductions in the conscription level. The Air Force took the opportunity offered by the Army's decline to heighten its political profile, and its Chief of Staff Brigadier Crespo cultivated good links to the Radical government. This did not, however, prevent the force from suffering considerably from budget cuts and equipment shortages, the latter largely the result of the US arms embargo.

#### Effect of the Dirty War

13. The Armed Forces as a whole never accepted that in suppressing the Montoneros and ERP they had done anything wrong. The exception was a small and not very representative group of left-wing officers (mostly retired, in Cemida and Aula) and the 33 Orientals, a small group of neo-Peronist officers who protested

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at the time against the methods of repression. If there can be said to be a unifying factor between the great majority of military officers it is the conviction that not only should officers not be put on trial, as the newly-formed government of President Alfonsín insisted, but that they should be formally congratulated for having rid the nation of the threat of communist take-over. If in doing so they had to resort to unconventional and distasteful methods, this was justified by the unconventional methods employed by their enemies. What mattered was winning.

14. This attitude extended to junior officers too young to have participated in the "Dirty War" but unhappy at belonging to an institution whose public prestige was so low. It was largely the support of these officers which guaranteed the success of Lt Col Aldo Rico's rebellion in Easter 1987, resulting in the Law of Due Obedience which exonerated all junior and quite a lot of senior officers from trial. This was grudgingly accepted by the military. But their goal remains a full amnesty, something Alfonsín has said he will never grant. Whether a future Peronist government is prepared to do so remains to be seen.

#### Future Role of Armed Forces in Society

15. Since the return to constitutional government the Armed Forces have been obsessed with their role and status in society. Following the experience of the process government, the Radicals determined that henceforth the Armed Forces should be excluded from any involvement in internal security functions. At the same time they concluded that Argentina's pacifist foreign policy precluded the need for "hypotheses of conflict" with Chile or Brazil and that the Falklands should be recovered by peaceful diplomacy. All these provisions were reflected in a new National Defence Bill which, with the support of the Peronists, was passed in the Lower House of Congress in December 1987 but has yet to receive Senate approval. To the legalistically-minded Argentine military this law leaves them without a clearly-defined role and causes many to suspect that what Alfonsín would really like is to abolish the Armed Forces altogether.

#### Resources

16. Resources and pay have become serious bones of contention. Since 1984 the Defence budget has been reduced from 4 to 2% of GDP. This has meant fewer conscripts for the Army (and on occasions inability to feed and clothe those they have), fewer flying hours and less maintenance for Air Force planes and a drastic reduction in time spent at sea for the Navy ships. As a result combat readiness in all these services has been much reduced, especially in the Army where it is estimated that there is sufficient ammunition for only two days' combat. Pay too has been significantly reduced. Traditionally military pay scales were linked to those of the judiciary: in the past four years their value against those of the judiciary has been halved. The officers still probably do not fare too badly. They enjoy

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subsidised housing, schools, medical treatment and holidays. But officers and NCOs with technical qualifications have increasingly been leaving to try their luck in the private sector. Many of those who remain, especially among the NCOs, have taken to moonlighting in order to make ends meet. Promised pay increases have been slow in coming and have failed to keep pace with inflation.

#### Divisions Within the Armed Forces

17. On the Falklands, the war against subversion, and the need for more resources and for a clearly defined role there is a fair measure of agreement within the Armed Forces. But there exist extensive political, ideological and even professional differences which are particularly marked within the Army. Following his rebellion in April 1987, Lt Col Rico and his supporters posited the existence of two armies: the older one consisting of a group of generals and colonels (normally described as liberals, in the classic Argentine sense) who were actively involved in the 1976-83 dictatorship and hence are by definition strongly anti-Peronist; and a younger group of officers who had seen action and who claimed to want a more professional, less politicized force shorn of the unproductive bureaucratic superstructure and inefficient civilian sector. The younger group, represented in the High Command only by General Heriberto Auel (who at Caridi's behest is now en disponibilité), was more nationalist, took a harder line on the Falklands but, paradoxically, wanted a defined role as part of the Western alliance and were not averse to receiving military assistance from abroad. The split between the two groups was real enough, but was evidently never as clear-cut in ideological terms as the rebels made out - and their own claims to professionalism were scarcely enhanced by an abject surrender to loyalist forces on 18 January.

18. An intermediate position in this division is represented by Col Mohamed Ali Seineldin, a charismatic Falklands veteran who has remained sedulously neutral in the dispute between the Rico group and the Army High Command. Those who know him describe him as a totally dedicated soldier but with Messianic tendencies and a streak of mysticism that could in certain circumstances turn him into another Ghaddafi (a man who he, and a surprising number of Argentine soldiers, admire). The extent of Seineldin's following in the Army is hard to assess, since so far he has adopted a quiescent role. But he is thought to be admired by and popular with many younger officers.

19. The conflict within the Army has been further exacerbated by inter-arm rivalry. Traditionally, the two most powerful arms have been the infantry and cavalry, with the artillery coming a rather poor third and the engineers and communicators nowhere (an officer from the latter two arms cannot by convention become Army Chief of Staff). Generalisations can be dangerous but it is fair to say that, as with the Blues and Reds in the 1960s, the tendency now is for the infantry to take a more active

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political role and to be less amenable to discipline while the cavalry is more "loyalist" in inclination. With the appointment of General Caridi, an artilleryman, as Chief of Staff, the artillery has tended to enjoy a higher profile and a military lodge in the artillery known as "El Piston" has begun to work secretly to achieve predominance for that arm.

20. In terms of formal political loyalties, the situation is much more complex, with a mosaic of shifting allegiances and a degree of opportunism which defies convenient categorisation. It is claimed that in the 1983 election many Army officers voted for the Radicals, but no convincing figures have been given to substantiate that claim. There is little evidence that the Radicals have much active support from within the Army. Such as there is tends to come from the intelligence side. (Colonels Sacco and Del Pino) and the artillery (Colonel Florencio Olmos). Within the officer corps, there is equally little evidence of clear support for the Peronists, although one of Lt Col Rico's associates is allegedly a Peronist activist. Indeed the present Army High Command, led by General Caridi, is reported to be virulently anti-Peronist and to be very unhappy about the numbers of former Montoneros now active in the Peronist Party. Such Peronists as there are among the officer corps tend to be very left-wing in orientation, such as the supporters of the 33 Orientales. There is at present no sign that their views are gaining ground within the Army. Support for Peronism among the NCOs is high - according to some estimates 60% - but this represents the old Orthodox Peronism and is probably more the product of class loyalties than ideological conviction. There are no statistics to justify the claim but in all probability the great mass of Army officers would now vote for the UceDe.

21. The situation is less complex in the Navy and Air Force. Such evidence as there is suggests that the Navy remain a cohesive, largely apolitical body. It is historically anti-Peronist - the Fleet Air Arm bombed the presidential palace in 1955 - and not particularly in favour of the Radicals. It too has its liberal/nationalist division but the nationalists appear less influential. In the Air Force, by no means all the junior officers look well on Brigadier Crespo's assiduous cultivation of the Radical party and there is evidence of a much stronger and more consistent nationalist outlook.

#### Attitudes of Political Parties

22. The Radical party came to office in 1984 with two clear objectives vis-a-vis the Armed Forces: to punish them for their excesses in the Dirty War and to subordinate them firmly to constitutional government. Their chosen instruments were the human rights trials, budget cuts and a new, restrictive national defence law. The left wing of the party, headed by deputies such as Federico Storani, and Senators Gass, Mahum and Solari Yrigoyen, manifested an outright antagonism towards the military which has been amply reciprocated. Since the death of Raul Borrás in 1985 the party has had few representatives able to maintain a dialogue with them. The Radicals have suffered from a lack of information about the military situation and a dearth of realistic policies for dealing with them.

23. In the case of the Peronists the situation is more complex. The Army gave birth to Peron, and then destroyed him, later overthrowing the government of his widow. Many Peronist politicians have suffered imprisonment at the hands of military governments. And yet the nationalist policies of the Orthodox Peronists at least make them inherently more sympathetic towards the Armed Forces than is the case with the professedly pacifist Radicals. Peronist policy towards the Falklands for example holds that the military option should not be ruled out, which presupposes Armed Forces strong enough to make such an option feasible. The Renewalist Peronists, who appear finally to have taken control of the party machine, have up to now adopted a more strongly moralistic attitude towards the Armed Forces than even the Radicals. But their lack of defined positions on such questions as amnesty may give them scope for greater pragmatism. Rico and his supporters certainly found them worth cultivating.

24. Of Argentina's political parties, it is probably the UCeDe which has the closest relationship with the Armed Forces. Its leader Alvaro Alsogaray was himself an Army officer and his daughter Maria Julia has taken an active role in the Lower House Defence Committee, espousing a sympathetic attitude to the problems of the Armed Forces and criticising government policy.

#### The Future

25. The defeat of the Rico group at the hands of General Caridi has created a new situation in the Army and has implications for the other two services. For the time being Caridi appears to have unified the Army command structure and is in a relatively strong position. To the Radicals Caridi's success is a double-edged weapon, good in that it establishes some measure of control over an increasingly anarchic organisation but problematic in so far as it strengthens the Army's role as a political pressure group. How the government reacts to the new situation is likely to determine the direction of civil/military relations for some time to come. They appear to have three options:

a. to give the Armed Forces something close to what they want on the revindication of the Dirty War, though not necessarily an amnesty, define their role in terms of hypotheses of conflict and possibly internal security, and give them the budgetary resources to begin serious work on professionalization.

b. to attempt to clamp down on them once and for all, forcing them into a subordinate role;

c. to continue the present piece-meal policy, responding to events as they occur.

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Option (a) is fraught with risks: the government may get nothing in return for their concessions and in making them lay themselves open to criticism from the Peronists and the left wing of their own party. Moreover it requires money which at present is not there.\* But it offers the only hope, however faint, that the attention of the military can be diverted from politics to soldiering. There are signs that Alfonsin and some of his ministers favour it. The left-wing of his party strongly favour option (b), as purportedly do the Renewalist Peronists. But it is hard to see how this can be a realistic proposition given the Army's new-found strength. Option (c) too has its risks: Rico and his immediate supporters may have been discredited but their objectives remain those of the Army as a whole, and of the middle-ranking officers in particular. Caridi will find it hard to maintain his grip unless he can show them some results. A repetition of the Rico rebellion is probably not on the cards for the immediate future, much less a coup d'etat. But the consequence of such a piece-meal approach will almost certainly be a lingering malaise and continued anarchy and indiscipline with serious political dangers in the longer term. Unfortunately it is also the most probable scenario. What happens in the Army is bound to affect the Navy and Air Force, albeit to a much lesser degree. The prospect of apolitical, professional Armed Forces with good morale looks remote.

\* A promised US\$ 350 million re-equipment programme for the Army, for example, shows no signs of materialising. In the longer term, however, money could be generated by the sale of military assets, including land, and by the privatisation of Ministry of Defence-owned companies.

British Interests Section  
Buenos Aires

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