

Argentina Flanks Synarchists With Ambitious Nuclear Program

by Cynthia R. Rush

In an Aug. 23 ceremony presided over by President Néstor Kirchner, and characterized by great optimism and pride, Argentine Planning Minister Julio de Vido announced a national program to “reactivate and restore” the nation’s nuclear industry. To the enthusiastic applause of the audience, which included leaders of the scientific community, the nuclear industry, most of the Cabinet, and the Ambassadors of Brazil, Canada, and Venezuela, De Vido outlined an ambitious plan for the long-term development of the nation’s nuclear capabilities, and related infrastructure and human resources.

This includes completion of the Atucha II nuclear plant, whose construction was paralyzed in 1994 and is 80% complete; extending the useful life of the existing Embalse plant for an additional 25 years; beginning feasibility studies for the construction of a fourth 1,000-megawatt nuclear plant; reopening the Pilcaniyeu uranium enrichment plant in the province of Neuquén, shut down in 1983; and restarting operations at the Arroyito heavy water plant, to produce 600 tons of heavy water for Atucha II. Aside from the “mass generation of nuclear energy,” De Vido announced that the second focus of the plan would be application of nuclear energy to industry and medicine.

By the end of 2006, he explained, the most modern diagnostic imaging center in South America will be operational at the Roffo National Hospital, and among other things, will provide services to the needier sectors of the population, as well as training personnel in nuclear medicine and carrying out research. In addition, the government has decided to declare the CAREM, a small, modular nuclear reactor produced by the state-owned INVAP company, a project of “national interest.” With its compact size and multiple applications, CAREM is capable of generating between 25 and 100 megawatts of electricity, and is ideal for operating in remote areas or small cities. Although currently existing only as a prototype, the plan is to mass produce and export it to developing countries.

An International Flank

Four members of the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) attended the press conference at the Presidential Palace (Casa Rosada), and were warmly welcomed by officials of the National Nuclear Energy Commission (CNEA) as representatives of American statesman Lyndon LaRouche. LaRouche’s

decades-long record of promoting nuclear energy as a science-driver for economic development, and supporting Argentina’s scientific endeavors, are well known and widely respected among these circles. In a 1984 visit to Buenos Aires, LaRouche met at length with leaders of the country’s nuclear energy and scientific community, which many still remember today.

More than a specifically Argentine development, the Kirchner government’s announcement is of strategic importance internationally, as it represents a crucial flank against the synarchist empire which has pushed the world to the brink of World War III with its policies of permanent warfare and economic destruction. Its impact will be felt particularly in Europe, where nations such as Germany and France are keenly interested in participating in Argentina’s nuclear industry, as well as reconsidering the options for nuclear development across Europe.

The Argentine announcement also represents a continental breakout along the precise programmatic lines specified by LaRouche in an international video-conference with Argentina and Mexico on June 15 of this year, on “The Role of Oil in the Transition to Nuclear Energy.”

Argentina, like most of the rest of the region, faces an acute energy crisis, squeezed by rising oil prices and shortages of natural gas. Its own increase in internal demand has forced it to curtail its natural gas exports to Chile and Uruguay. Although it has several hydro-electric and other energy projects under way, with the Aug. 23 announcement, the government has clearly made nuclear energy a priority to meet its energy needs and sustain economic growth.

This is not irrelevant to the regional situation. Brazil, South America’s other nuclear power, already has an uranium enrichment program under way and is building its third nuclear plant. Agreements for cooperation between the two countries date back to the 1980s, and as Minister De Vido pointedly noted, “for the bilateral process in the nuclear field with Brazil to have meaning and strategic significance, it is indispensable that Argentina reestablish its capabilities in certain technological areas such as uranium enrichment.”

The combination of Argentina’s and Brazil’s nuclear capabilities represents a potential for economic development that extends well beyond their borders, in terms of technology transfer, job creation, and training. The Mexican and Argen-



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President Néstor Kirchner (center), at a news conference about modernizing energy production, with Córdoba Gov. José Manuel de la Sota (left), and Planning Minister Julio De Vido.

tine LYM are already brainstorming about how to use the Argentine developments in Mexico, whose ambitious nuclear program of the early 1980s, put forward by President José López Portillo, was trashed by the synarchist financiers who have governed since 1982.

A 'Strategic Decision'

In his speech, De Vido reported that upon taking office in May 2003, President Kirchner decided "to put Argentina's nuclear activity once again on the road to reviving its strategic objectives, quickly and decisively restoring the principles of Decree 10,936" issued in May 1950 by then-President Juan Domingo Perón. That decree established the National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA), and as De Vido explained, "reflected a clear strategic vision, expressing among other things, that the progress of atomic energy cannot be ignored by the state, because of the multiple ways that its practical applications are felt, or will be felt in the future, in the public arena."

From the beginning, De Vido stated, "the state set and clearly enunciated its guiding role in the Argentine Nuclear Program," and will continue to do so, always for peaceful purposes, and for the benefit of the Argentine people "and humanity."

Argentina's pioneering nuclear program, begun in the mid-1940s, has always been a source of immense national pride. The government created several scientific institutes, set up university programs, and recruited national and foreign scientists—many of them from Germany and other European nations—to train personnel and help develop the necessary infrastructure. In 1953, after U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower launched his "Atoms for Peace" program, Argentina and the United States signed the first agreement for coopera-

tion in the peaceful application of nuclear energy, including a commitment to exchange information on design, construction, and maintenance of research reactors.

In 1977, with the issuance of Decree No. 302, the government outlined a program to build four nuclear reactors, slated to come online between 1987 and 1997, along with the requisite infrastructure, including a heavy water reactor. With the involvement of Canadian and German companies, Argentina completed the 357 MW Atucha I plant in 1974, and the Embalse plant in 1984, which now generates 650 megawatts. In the early 1980s, the CNEA signed an agreement with Germany's KWU to build the Atucha II plant, scheduled for completion by 1988.

During this same period, Argentina announced that it had achieved the full nuclear fuel cycle. By the mid-1980s, nuclear energy provided approximately 17% of the nation's electricity supply—today that has dropped to 4%. In 1982, then-head of the CNEA Adm. Carlos Castro Madero proposed agreements for technology transfer with other Ibero-American nations, and others, offering to help train personnel. While expressing a commitment to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, he refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which he said reflected the "neo-colonial" views of countries that wanted to deny nuclear, or any advanced technology, to developing nations.

The international Malthusian lobby, for which any expression of national sovereignty through the development of independent scientific capabilities is anathema, went ballistic. Pointing to Armed Forces' involvement in Brazil's and Argentina's programs, this mob alleged that both must be planning to produce "weapons of mass destruction" or nuclear bombs. Combined with the imposition of the International Monetary Fund's draconian free-market dictates, applied so brutally by Argentina's 1976-83 military junta and continued under successive governments until 2003, this offensive greatly slowed down, but did not halt, the nuclear program.

Had it not been for the "fight waged fundamentally by the workers" against the monetarist policies of the 1990s, De Vido said, the nuclear program might have been dismantled altogether. But because of those in the sector "who for many years worked and fought tenaciously to keep Argentina's nuclear option alive," that didn't happen. Now, there will be more electricity generation, he said, "but we will also reactivate the entire scientific, technological, and industrial spectrum associated with the nuclear sector, creating a strong demand for highly specialized human resources."