Argentina: Seizure of Universities Leaves Intellectual Casualties

On 29 July, a few weeks after a military coup that ousted the elected government of Arturo Illia, Argentina's president Juan Carlos Ongania issued a decree ordering the rectors and deans of the country's eight national universities to pledge their loyalty to the new regime or to resign. What was at stake was not a simple oath of allegiance but the abolition of the universities' autonomous status. The universities' traditional institutions of self-government—tripartite councils including faculty, students, and alumni—were dissolved, and the rectors and deans were transformed from independent officials into servants of the state, specifically of its Ministry of Education. Whatever the expectations of the Ongania regime, the result of its action was a monumental upheaval in the country's universities.

The scope and meaning of the upheaval cannot be assessed with great precision from this distance. Nonetheless, a number of sources are available: American correspondents have been on the scene, a number of American scholars have visited Argentina in various capacities since 29 July, and Argentinian scholars already in the United States have been in communication with their colleagues at home. The following account is based on these sources.

At the University of Buenos Aires—which has about half of the 150,000 students at the national universities and almost all the advanced students—the deans and rectors immediately issued a statement in which they refused to accept the change in the universities' status. Rolando Garcia, a meteorologist and dean of the Faculty of Exact Sciences, called a meeting of the university's directing council—attended by many professors also—to explain the statement and seek its ratification. A vote was taken by which the resignations were approved. Some of the subsequent events are described in a letter by an eyewitness, Warren Ambrose, a professor of mathematics at M.I.T., who was teaching at Buenos Aires during the semester. According to Ambrose:

> . . . The police came and with no formalities demanded that all people in the building evacuate, saying they would enter by force in 20 minutes (the doors of the Faculty had been locked as a symbol of resistance—apart from this there was no resistance). The people inside remained quiet, not knowing what to expect. There were about 300 of us: about 20 were professors, the rest being students and teaching assistants. . . .
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> Then the police came. I am told they had to break open the doors but the first thing I heard was some bombs, which turned out to be tear gas bombs. Soon we were all crying from the tear gas. Then came the soldiers shouting for us to go to one of the large rooms, where we were made to stand with our arms in the air against the wall. The procedure for getting us to do this was to shout and beat us with sticks. The beating was random and I saw a woman struck intentionally—all with no provocation. To the best of my knowledge none of us was armed and none offered any resistance—everyone (including myself) was frightened and had no idea of resisting. We were all standing against the wall—surrounded by soldiers with guns, all shouting roughly (and clearly excited by what they were doing—they seemed to have been emotionally prepared to be brutal with us). Then . . . they grabbed us, one by one, and started us toward the exit of the building. But, they arranged for us to go out through a line of soldiers, one every ten feet or so, who beat us with sticks, with butts of rifles, and who kicked us hard—in whatever part of the body they could reach. . . . This gauntlet was run by all of us, women, distinguished professors, the dean and vice-president of the faculty, teaching assistants, and students. . . . Professor Carlos Varsavsky, director of the new radio observatory in La Plata, received serious head wounds; an ex-secretary of the faculty of seventy years was seriously wounded; and Felix Gonzales Bonorino, the most eminent geologist of the country, was also badly hurt. . . .

While elsewhere there was evidently no immediate violence, Ongania's decree shattered the country's intellectual institutions. The rectors and most of the deans of the four major universities—in addition to Buenos Aires—La Plata, Del Littoral, Cordoba, and Tucuman—also resigned. Officials of the three smallest national universities—Bahia Blanca, Corrientes, and Mendoza—said they would accept the decree. But the others were closed down by Ongania for a "brief time" that he repeatedly extended; even now that they are officially functioning again, they are so decimated by faculty resignations that their performance is reported to be farcical. In the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires, for example, not one lecture has been given since the upheaval. At another university, where the dean of architecture was among those who resigned, not one senior faculty member could be persuaded to assume his post; the job is now being held by the Argentinian equivalent of a teaching assistant.

Other intellectual casualties include the University of Buenos Aires Press, one of the largest publishing operations in the Spanish-speaking world, whose top staff all resigned, and *Tia Vicenta*, a magazine of political satire, which was shut down by the regime. An American scientist attending an international symposium in Buenos Aires in early August reported that foreign participants who wished to visit laboratories at the university were often unable to do so; a number of Latin-American physiologists planning to attend the Seventh Congress of the Latin-American Physiological Society at Mar del Plata voted to show support for their Argentinian colleagues by staying away. Last week about 75,000 students went on strike; violence was reported in an encounter between police and students at Cordoba.

Leading Scientists Resign

While resignations have occurred in almost all disciplines and in every university, reports are unanimous that they are most prevalent at the University of Buenos Aires and, within the university, in the Faculty of Exact Sciences. Nearly half of the university's total faculty of about 2000 have resigned, officially or unofficially, including nearly 200 of the 350 members of the Faculty of Sciences. This figure is reported to include many of Argentina's leading scientists, including Garcia and Manuel Sadosky, an eminent research chemist who is also assistant dean of the faculty. Resignations have been fewest in the schools of law, dentistry, and medicine; they have been substantial from the faculties of engineering and architecture and from the liberal-arts faculties.

The reaction of the U.S. government to these events has been somewhat ambiguous. The government notified Ongania of its "dismay and concern" over the closing of the universities, and protested the beating of Warren Ambrose.

However, Lincoln Gordon, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, made a statement to the press in which he appeared to be saying that the crackdown was justified because the universities harbored professional agitators. Gordon later denied that interpretation and issued a clarification which stated:

> . . . As a former university professor, I have often lamented that the tradition of university freedom or autonomy, whose proper purpose is to protect the freedom of teaching, has been abused in some Latin American institutions to the extent of their becoming asylums for gangsters or for professional students who have no interest in studies but only in subversive agitation.
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> I appreciate that any Government might be concerned at this condition. But I believe these abuses should be corrected through civilized and lawful means, and not through violent police raids.

Gordon's clarification, while dissociating the U.S. government from Ongania's violent means, seems to associate it nonetheless with Ongania's purposes. How many in the Argentinian universities agree with the proposition that the "agitators"—a euphemism for Communists and other political radicals—need to be eliminated is not clear. John Goshko, Latin American correspondent for the Washington *Post*, reported that, while many faculty members favored some reform that would reduce the influence of the students, their object was stricter control by the faculty, not domination by the government.

In addition, while professors' views of students' politics inevitably depend a good deal on the professors' own views—and there are a good many factions among the professors—it appears that many Argentinian intellectuals hold a rather relaxed view of their students' radicalism. "Of course there are Communists," an Argentinian scientist at Harvard commented to *Science* in a telephone interview, "but we're used to them. Our attitude is, what of it?" An Argentinian, described as having had a distinguished career in teaching, business, and government, told Goshko that Argentine students are, if anything, "more middle class than their counterparts in other Latin countries, and their reading of Marxist tomes is all of a piece with wearing miniskirts, reading Ionesco, and watching Ingmar Bergman films. When they get their degrees and have to start earning a living, the great majority will quickly become just as bourgeois as their fathers, who were the university leftists of 30 and 40 years ago."

While the attack on the science faculty at Buenos Aires is generally agreed to have been unprovoked, most observers have found its sources in the extreme-rightist and Catholic-nationalist sentiments of the leading figures in the new regime. According to Goshko, these individuals "have great influence on the deeply religious Ongania and . . . have pressed him to wage war against what they regard as communistic and 'liberal atheistic' influences." Many officials of the regime, including some new appointees to high places in the university system, have also been associated with anti-semitic movements in the past. Police breaking up the Buenos Aires meeting are reported to have shouted anti-Semitic slogans. And, while the government is reportedly taking great pains to reassure Argentina's large Jewish community that it is not about to resurrect Nazism, fear of anti-Semitism and anti-intellectualism as well as specific fears of government control of education, is reported to have played a key role in inducing so many resignations.

This fear is also implicit in a manifesto signed by 65 professors at one of Argentina's four Roman Catholic universities—which were not affected by the decree—in support of their colleagues. "The principal of university autonomy is the most important factor in achieving higher academic levels," the Catholic professors said. "That and nondiscrimination for reasons of race, ideology, politics, or religious beliefs within the university community."

Another factor cited by observers as contributing to the concentration of police violence at the Buenos Aires science faculty is related to continuing conflict between the new post-Peron generation of scholars and scientists and an older generation of faculty members that includes many part-time members and political appointees. After the overthrow of Juan Peron in 1955, his successor started out to rebuild the universities, increasing the budgets and attracting many foreign scientists. Many of the older professors, edged out by more-qualified newcomers, moved to religious-sponsored colleges; and it is believed by some university observers that these displaced professors may have influenced Ongania to take over their old domains. Whether or not Ongania did in fact mean to aim chiefly at the new generation, there is little doubt that that has been the result. In a letter to the Buenos Aires *Herald*, cited in the New York *Times*, Juan Roederer, director of Argentina's National Center of Cosmic Radiation, said that the government's actions were "setting back Argentine science for years and threatening to wipe out the achievements of the new generation." Other observers agree that at this point Argentinian science has been, as one visiting scholar put it, "snapped off." The question now is how, if at all, can the government recoup the staggering loss it has visited upon its own country.

Migrations

Early reports of mass migration of the professors who resigned appear to have been somewhat exaggerated. A number have apparently accepted posts in other Latin American countries (chiefly in Chile, Venezuela, and Mexico), and some have already taken jobs in this country, including positions at the University of Chicago, Northwestern, and the University of Texas. At this writing, however, most seem to remain in Argentina, either clearing up their affairs in preparation for a departure or waiting for some move on the part of the government that would make departure unnecessary. Of the Argentinian scholars in this country—who appear to number well over 100—few are reported to be planning to return home.

Meanwhile, the plight of their fellow professors is stirring considerable interest in the American academic community. The National Academy of Sciences has taken an active interest, as has the Latin American Studies Association. The two groups recently sent a exploratory mission to Argentina; a report of the findings will be published shortly in the *Latin American Research Review*.

The question of how to be a good neighbor in this situation appears, however, to be a troublesome one. American scholars, acting through these groups, through informal links, and under the auspices of various previously established interuniversity programs, have been trying to help in any way possible—including finding positions at U.S. universities for their beleaguered friends. But no official group or institution wants to be in the position of publicly sponsoring "raiding," "brain-draining," or the denudation of Argentina of its academic resources. The National Academy of Sciences, for example, has decided to try to strengthen its ties with

certain nonuniversity research institutions in Argentina, the Latin-American Studies Association, among its other efforts, is reportedly trying to interest American foundations in providing alternative positions for the Argentinian scholars in Argentina.

It also appears that some unofficial American emissaries, and perhaps some official ones as well, have been striving to muster whatever influence they possess in Argentina to persuade Ongania to end the crisis by apologizing to the professors and changing his position. It has to be said, however, that the tendency to discourage migration, however decent its motivation, is open to the interpretation that, when all is said and done, it constitutes an indirect form of American support for the Ongania regime.

The major exception to the policy of discretion is an effort being mounted by the National Academy of Sciences on behalf of Argentinian graduate students. The Academy believes that, while eventually the senior scientists will find ways to continue their careers, the education of the students will be severely disrupted. Accordingly, the Academy is attempting to coordinate efforts to find places for the students in American universities, despite the fact that the applications are apt to arrive at unfortunate times in the academic year and that departments may have to dip into reserve funds to accommodate them. According to Joseph Bunnett, University of California professor of chemistry who visited Argentina for the Academy with the Latin American Studies Association team, the number of students affected is probably no more than 30, not more than 10 of whom would be in the same field.—ELINOR LANGER

Congress: Debate Over Science Jurisdictions

Congress from time to time takes a look at its internal organization and procedures to see if it is equipped to meet the demands of the day. These moments of introspection often follow sharp comment by outsiders that the congressional machinery is out of order. Such criticism, which had reached a high level of intensity prior to last year's unusually productive session of Congress, helped inspire the establishment, in early 1965, of the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress. It was understood, of course, that the committee was not to propose drastic reforms threatening those privileges and immunities which members hold most dear.

Thus the Joint Committee's recent recommendations are not revolutionary in the least. However, they do include a few proposals sure to produce conflict within Congress. One such recommendation is that for a rearrangement of certain committee jurisdictions in science, research, and education. Heavy resistance to these jurisdictional changes already is evident.

The committee, a temporary 12-member body made up of equal numbers of senators and representatives and of Democrats and Republicans, is chaired by Representative Ray J. Madden of Indiana and Senator A. S. Mike Monroney of Oklahoma. Its report, made public in July, contains a wide variety of recommendations, calling for such things as greater staff support for committees and individual members, more expeditious conduct of committee business, tighter restrictions on the number of committees on which a senator may serve, a prohibition of proxy voting in committee, the establishment of an ethics committee in the House, and more comprehensive regulation of lobbying.

No recommendations dealt with super-sensitive questions such as whether the custom of selecting committee chairmen strictly on seniority should be altered or abandoned, or whether Senate rules should permit filibusters. The committee was barred by its mandate from recommending changes in House and Senate rules other than those pertaining to the organization and jurisdiction of committees.

Publication of the report followed a 16-month study which involved hearing the views of almost 200 witnesses, including numerous congressmen, political scientists, and spokesmen for various lobbies and interest groups. No testimony from people in the physical or natural sciences was received or specifically solicited, although the committee announced that anyone wishing to testify would be welcome.

In its report the committee said, "Congress can best bring a greater order and efficiency to its supervision of the Government's science and research programs by concentrating their review in as few standing committees as is practical." Accordingly, the committee recommended that the Senate Aeronautical and Space Sciences Committee be redesignated the Committee on Science and Astronautics, making its name correspond to that of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics.

The Joint Committee report and subsequent draft legislation to implement the recommendations call for the National Science Foundation, the National Bureau of Standards, and the Environmental Science Services Administration (ESSA) to be transferred to the renamed committee. The Committee on Labor and Public Welfare would lose jurisdiction over NSF, while the Commerce Committee would lose jurisdiction over the Bureau of Standards and ESSA.

The House Committee on Science and Astronautics already has jurisdiction over NSF and the Bureau of Standards, but, under the Joint Committee's recommendations, its jurisdiction would be broadened to include ESSA, for which the Committees on Interstate and Foreign Commerce and Merchant Marine and Fisheries are now largely responsible. In short, the Joint Committee tried to address itself to complaints, sometimes heard within the scientific community and elsewhere, that committee responsibility for science and technology is too fragmented.

The far simpler question of committee responsibility for education also was looked at critically. Neither the House nor the Senate has a committee devoted exclusively to education, even though annual federal support of education is now on a multi-billion-dollar