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Argentines Protest Presidential Pardons Of Military Personnel Accused Of Human Rights Abuses

by John Neagle
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On the evening of Oct. 20, an estimated 15,000 demonstrators staged a rally outside capital buildings in Buenos Aires to protest President Carlos Menem's decrees pardoning military officers accused of serious human rights abuses during the "dirty war" years. (See Chronicle 10/10/89 for summary of decrees.) A committee comprised of representatives from human rights organizations, political parties and trade unions delivered a petition expressing opposition to the pardons, signed by nearly 500,000 Argentine citizens. Nobel Peace Prize winner, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, told Bauza: "The pardon is an immoral and authoritarian decision." The minister replied that Menem "has the moral authority" as well as the constitutional right to issue such pardons. Nora Cortinas, member of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, said, "The president does not have the wherewithal to pardon crimes against humanity." Bauza interrupted Cortinas, asserting that "We Argentines have to bring ourselves to reconciliation." Similar protest rallies took place in Rosario, Cordoba, and other cities throughout the country. (Basic data from Notimex, 10/21/89)

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