

## IAEA Criticized

# Argentina Fights Restrictions on Technology Transfer

"Argentina is ready to dispense with the technical assistance provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) because of the obstacles imposed by the most developed countries and the excessive restrictions on the transfer of technology," the head of the Argentine Atomic Energy Commission told a press conference there April 6. "However," Rear Admiral Carlos Castro Madero added, "the country will not withdraw from the organization."

Argentina's threat to pull out of the technological aid programs of the IAEA came as a response to newly formulated text for the IAEA "ruling principles" restricting technical aid to countries—like Argentina—that have not signed the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The new text was presented by the so-called Club of London countries (those with a developed nuclear technology) in the IAEA Secretariat and was voted and approved in early April.

The new text is a "serious violation of the IAEA statutes," the Argentine semiofficial newspaper, *La Opinión*, wrote April 5. The previous text, the paper said, "in accordance with IAEA statutes did not specifically restrict aid for ... [nuclear] peaceful purposes. The statutes prohibited only military uses."

AEC head Castro Madero and other civilian and military spokesmen have insisted that Argentina's nuclear development is strictly for peaceful purposes. If Argentina refuses to sign the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, it is because the Club of London uses it to "restrict technological" transfer to developing countries, Castro Madero said April 3. Such restrictions, "disguised behind the praiseworthy goal

of precluding nuclear proliferation, seek to strengthen the nuclear hegemony of a few and further increase the differences between developed and developing countries."

### Argentina: A Nuclear Leader

Argentina is the acknowledged leader in Latin America in nuclear development, with the only operating nuclear electricity-generating facility in Latin America. The country's achievements in the nuclear energy field are particularly significant given the severe austerity policies imposed on Argentina by the International Monetary Fund during the last three years.

Last year, the Argentine government approved a very ambitious nuclear plan that calls for nuclear self-sufficiency by the year 2000 and for a constant increase in the percentage of domestic energy consumption provided by nuclear energy. Argentina plans to build a total of six plants by 1997. The first of these, a 320-mega-

watt plant located in Buenos Aires, began operation in 1974; the second plant is a 600-megawatt reactor built by Canada's AECL that will be inaugurated in 1980 in the province of Cordoba, one of Argentina's industrial centers.

Both plants use heavy water as coolant and natural uranium as fuel, and one of the immediate goals of the nuclear development plan is to build an experimental heavy-water production plant. Although Argentina has uranium reserves estimated to exceed 60,000 tons, it still depends primarily on Canada and the United States to import heavy water. Argentina has charged that Canada has used Argentina's dependence on heavy-water imports as a political weapon to try to force the nation to sign the Nonproliferation Treaty.

The government opened up bidding April 2 for construction of the heavy-water plant as well as Argentina's third nuclear plant, Atucha II. Five countries are bidding: AECL from Canada, General Electric from the United Kingdom, KWU-Siemans from West Germany, Nira from Italy, and Sulzer from Switzerland. KWU-Siemans is believed to be a leader in the bidding because of the West German government's promotion of technology transfer without strings and the fact that the firm has a proven track record in Argentina.

—Dolia Pettingell

## Saudis Plan Atomic Energy Center

The government of Saudi Arabia announced in April that it will build a nuclear reactor and fuel processing plant that will include an atomic energy center to train scientists and technicians.

Hailing the announcement, the *Saudi Gazette* said April 5: "Such a step is in line with the people's aspirations to catch up with modern technological advances. We have proved during the last 50 years that we are capable of adopting modern technologies without discarding our traditions and values. We also realize that our stability and prosperity are linked to those of the rest of the world. We hope someday that Saudi scientists will have a tangible role in spreading knowledge and technology round the world."

Another commentator in the same newspaper called the plan a "breakthrough indeed, especially for bringing up a generation of atomic scientists and specialists."