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ARGENTINA

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WILL NOT CONVENE.

~~(S/NOFORN)~~ The Senate President's decision not to convoke a legislative assembly next week probably moves Argentina closer to a military government.

~~(S/NOFORN)~~ On 4 March, Senator Italo Luder announced that such an assembly would be unconstitutional. He suggested that a multi-party meeting would be the best way to solve the country's pressing political problems. However, some opposition congressmen accused Luder of being bought off by close supporters of Mrs. Peron, and that by his action he had blocked the last chance for a constitutional solution to the current political crisis.

~~(S/NOFORN)~~ Meanwhile, the inability of the Peronists to solve their political problems will probably be demonstrated at a Party Congress scheduled to begin 6 March. Party delegates are already sharply divided with little chance for reconciliation. The meeting is likely to be a real showdown between those opposing and supporting Mrs. Peron's continuance in office.

~~(S/NOFORN)~~ In another development, on 5 March the government launched a crash program to revive the rapidly faltering economy. A six-month wage and price freeze with a 12 percent wage increase for workers retroactive to 1 March was effected. At the same time the "peso" was devaluated and the cost of gasoline, fuel oil, gas, and public services and utilities was raised. These economic measures probably constitute another last ditch effort by Mrs. Peron to stave off military intervention by appealing to labor elements for support. The new program, however, except for the wage increase, is not likely to gain support from the country's workers who will directly experience the increased costs of public services.

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~~(C/NOFORN)~~ In any event, neither the Party Congress nor the economic measures will significantly affect the outcome of the political crisis. If a serious confrontation occurs among the various factions at the Party Meeting or if labor is not receptive to the new economic plan, the military's contention that civilian institutions are no longer capable of providing solutions to the nation's problems will be reinforced.

~~(C/NOFORN/NOINTTEL)~~ There are still indications that the military will take over the government, and the ultimate decision as to when reportedly remains in the hands of Army Commander, General Videla. The most likely time for such a move is on a Friday evening or weekend when the majority of the labor force is off and can't be readily organized to interfere or protest the military's intervention in the government. Some reporting indicates that the military commanders are pressing for the coup next weekend, which now seems likely. ~~(YDS 2 Declassify upon notification of originator)~~

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