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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

(DRAFT)

DATE: November 21, 1977

SUBJECT: CONCERNS OF THE ARGENTINE JEWISH COMMUNITY

PARTICIPANTS: DR. N. RESNISKY, PRESIDENT DAIA
DR. JUAN GUREVICH, VICE PRESIDENT DAIA
DR. MARCOS KORENHENDLER, VICE PRESIDENT DAIA
SR. MOISES CAMJI, VICE PRESIDENT DAIA
SR. N. BARBARA S, VICE PRESIDENT DAIA
SR. MANFREDO BAUMATZ, VICE PRESIDENT DAIA
SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE
AMBASSADOR CASTRO
ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN
ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN
EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER HARRIS

PLACE: AMERICAN EMBASSY, BUENOS AIRES

Secretary Vance opened the meeting by thanking the Delegacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA) members for coming and indicating that he wished to hear their views of the current situation in Argentina.

Dr. Reznisky, President of the DAIA made a long presentation which he began by pointing out that this was a very difficult period for Argentina. Subversion is an enemy of the country and also of the Jewish community. The present problem is anti-semitism among a majority of the government's repressive forces. He emphasized that the DAIA cannot prove that the government is officially anti-semitic, but that the government has a responsibility to establish and enforce limits on its agents.

Dr. Reznisky mentioned that there are many stories of innocent Jews being subjected to anti-semitic questioning after their detention. These reports from members of the Jewish community, as well as lists of detained and disappeared Jews, are turned over to the Permanent Assembly on Human Rights. He added that persons are not arrested for being Jewish but that their religion brings about complications after their detention.

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(Drafting Office and Officer)

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Dr. Reznisky stated that Jacobo Timerman is the most important symbol for the Argentine Jewish community, as Mr. Timerman is hated with vigor by all the "Nazi elements" within this society. He has been held for many months, He has been exonerated by a military court. No charges have been placed against him, yet last week the government put him under the Act of Institutional Responsibility, which had the effect of stripping him of his civil liberties and property. Mr. Reznisky said that he did not know if U.S. pressure in the Timerman case would in fact be helpful, but it is appreciated by the Jewish community. Minister of the Interior, General Harguindeguy, had previously told the DAIA that Mr. Timerman would be released in the near future. After the latest legal maneuver against Timerman, the DAIA has asked for another interview with the President and the Minister of Interior to discuss the case. Mr. Timerman is very disturbed at the recent turn of events and only wants to obtain his freedom.

Mrs. Derian said that she had received a message from Mr. Timerman earlier in the day and had met with his family and his lawyer. Secretary Vance said that both the Timerman and the Deutsch cases had been raised during his meetings with President Videla and other Argentine authorities. Mr. Reznisky reiterated that Mr. Timerman is a symbol to Argentine Jewish community.

Mr. Reznisky noted that there had been fewer disappearances recently. For example in the last 15 to 20 days no new cases had been reported to the DAIA. Normally, if a disappearance involves a Jew, the DAIA office would be informed. The Secretary asked if the Government of Argentina has been in touch with the DAIA regarding cases of Jewish citizens. Mr. Reznisky replied that they had several discussions with senior members of the government regarding anti-semitism in Argentina. Mr. Reznisky pointed out that when a Jewish person is released, the DAIA hears stories that the person received more serious torture. "Jews get extra treatment." Interrogation sessions are studded with strange questions such as, "What is the relationship between Begin and international terrorism?" or "How are the Jews planning to take over Argentina?". A number of Jewish detainees have related these experiences, including Mr. Timerman.

Assistant Secretary Derian related that the Foreign Ministry's Under Secretary Allara had stated that the government maintained close contact with the DAIA and had guaranteed that there were no problems of anti-semitism in the country. She asked for Mr. Reznisky's comment on that statement. He replied that the DAIA leadership had to be careful in what they say as they represent the entire Jewish community. He said that the DAIA is convinced that harping on these (anti-semitic) matters is not productive. "It does not do us any good to attack the government." The major problem is that the government does not have the power to eliminate these "Nazi" and other unlawful elements, therefore, we don't complain about the government in general. When we do complain about specific cases, however, we find that Jewish prisoners get better treatment."

In reply to Mrs. Derian's reference to the DAIA book on Admiral Brown which had been presented to the Foreign Ministry, Mr. Reznisky explained that the DAIA published this book, not as any indication of special support for the Armed Forces, but as part of a continual program to show the Jewish community's connection with Argentina. He noted that last year the DAIA published a book about Argentina's Liberator, San Martin.

Mr. Reznisky described the DAIA's discussions with the Foreign Ministry as open and frank. The DAIA had recently complained about Argentina's being the first Latin American non-communist country to co-sponsor an anti-Israeli resolution in the UN.

The Secretary inquired under whose jurisdiction most of the interrogation abuses take place. Mr. Reznisky replied that the abuses are committed by the Joint Security Forces, which are to the extreme right. He noted that "as a community, we are opposed to the extreme right".

The Secretary thanked the members of the DAIA for meeting with him and the meeting ended.

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION:

S - The Secretary
ARA - Mr. Todman
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