

December 1, 1976

TO: The Files

FROM: FERondon

SUBJECT: Congressman Drinan on Argentina

**CC: Mr. Bray, Mr. Zimmermann, Mr. Black (H), and Amembassy
Buenos Aires.**

Congressman Drinan spoke at Georgetown University last night to about 200 people, including Mrs. Orlando Letelier.

A few of his comments follow:

- The disappearance of Josefa Martinez was the saddest thing. She had no political connections. To this date, we have no idea where she is. Two days ago, her family told us to stop making inquiries, which suggested to us that something might happen to the family too.
- I wish to address 3 major issues: UN refugees, the number of prisoners under torture and the kinds of religious repression.
- There was total chaos after Peron died. Lopez Rega was a kind of Rasputin. Total chaos in latter months. Inflation 550%. A crystal ball in which Lopez Rega would appear (from Madrid) told her what bills to sign. The people were happy to see military government.
- People say Videla is a moderate. This remains to be seen.
- There are 25,000 refugees. The Argentines distrust anyone who fears to return to his own country. The otherwise rational Argentines see their country as a stepping stone for international Marxism. The countries of the region have formed an international CIA. 130 refugees are being moved out of Argentina weekly. The U.S. is doing so little, so late. The U.S. which caused the problem by destabilizing Allende. I didn't find a single Chilean who wanted to come here.

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- The Argentine Government officials were cordial, cool and correct to us. We pressed hard to allow Argentine political prisoners to leave.
- Refugee applications should be expedited. We should get the new Attorney General to grant new visas.
- The law should be amended because people sit here in judgement over who may be allowed to come to the United States or not, judging whether others are subversives. This violates the Helsinki Agreement in spirit. Screening security risks.
- There is no way to estimate the number of political prisoners. The Amnesty ballpark figure is 20,000. There were 4,000 on March 24. Since then, between 4,000 and 14,000.
- We were refused a list of prisoners. If there is one thing which a civilized nation should do, it is to give a list of prisoners for the relatives. Barbarous. Family should have knowledge.
- The number of disappearances is astonishing. Monica Mignone. The Navy took her; there are signed affidavits of those who saw this. The government claims that it does not know where she is.
- No one who has committed a right wing abduction has ever been punished.
- A gentleman from the Argentine Government asked me about Colonel Pita, who was the man who harrassed and suppressed the unions. He was taken captive. I was propositioned. If you give us information, we'll give you information.
- I recommend a Mort Rosenblum article in NY Review of Books. He says it is impossible to know who is doing the killing in Argentina.
- The Junta has more power than any other government in living memory in Argentina. The courts have been emasculated, Congress and the unions suspended.
- The code of military justice has become applicable in civilian courts.
- Junta has gone far beyond what Constitution permits.

- Civil War ? 2,000 people killed. No civil war; the same number of people are killed yearly in New York.
- No one stands up in Argentina. The lawyers association is afraid to name the 30-40 lawyers who are in jail for defending political prisoners. What about journalists ? La Prensa only publishes TELAM reports. La Opinion did publish a favorable article about Amnesty. The universities are intimidated. Policemen are on every corner of every university campus, save the University of Belgrano.
- The 1853 Constitution abolished torture. Torture is a crime in Argentina. Torture goes on. Two Jesuits who were released recently had been tortured.
- Has anyone been penalized ? Yes, the government says but it is a secret. Foreign Minister Guzzetti said in October in the U.S. that there is no punishment.
- The military are out of control. (An Argentine asked me if it is like our military during the Vietnam War. Yes.)
- Religious freedom. The Church took on Peron in 1955. What about now ? A head-on clash is coming. There are 15-20 priests in jail now. July 4: 3 priests and 2 seminarians killed. When five people are killed like that, you can find murderers.
- The military Bishop (chaplain) says communists are not convertible.
- I do not know whether there will be persecution of Catholic Church. If they speak out, there could be more violations. The Argentines say "don't rock the boat." Videla is a Catholic with 6 children.
- General Menendez is an anti-Semite.
- Jehovah's Witnesses have a worse time but I saw no open persecution. The Argentines have received hundreds, even thousands of letters and they seem to take these letters seriously.
- Jews. There is anti-Semitism every time there is instability. La Prensa editorialized that 48 organizations had been shut down and that Anti-Semitic groups should be closed too.
- The FRG has copyrights to anti-Semitic literature. It should not permit publication.

- The Jews are scared to speak out. Those who do could be made scapegoats. The American Jewish Committee offices were ransacked while I was in Argentina.
- What are we going to do in America about this ?
- \$47 million goes from U.S. taxpayer for security assistance. Congress can cut it off as it did in the cases of Uruguay and Chile. I assume there will be controversy over this.
- IDB loans. \$150 million for Argentina. 35% of the money from U.S.
- IBRD. \$115 million. 25% from U.S. taxpayer.
- Do you want your government to continue \$47 million in military aid ? \$50 million for IDB and \$35 million for IBRD ? Argentina is in the same shoes as Uruguay and Chile.
- The symbol is more important than the money. I hope that Carter puts a very strong man into human rights office at State. State should ride herd on Argentina. We must abide by Harkin Amendment.
- What about Latin American policy ? Special relationship makes nonsense. As Lowenthal says, all of the solutions will come from solutions of global problems. De-emphasize security.
- No American money from internal security. Why should Peoria pay for the guards that protected me ? Why should we pay to keep Monica Mignone in jail ?
- We read about political prisoners in Iran, Indonesia, and India. But somehow it is less excusable in the Americas, in a Catholic country.
- Brazilian bishops: Such anti-communism brutalizes its agents.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

- If the Government is out of control and the left is out of control, what do you do ? We shouldn't go in like Chile. Only world community can do it. That's the 64 peso question. But as an "ugly American" I don't think that I should have an answer. That's up to them.

- The worse violence takes place outside the government. The right wing people are not really police or military but they carry out their work.
- Guerrillas are terrifying. The police chief's office was blown up the week I was there. An inside job.
- I can't predict what Congress will do.
- The Fraser hearings did not have adequate spectrum but this will come with further hearings.
- Can the United States put more pressure on the government ? Should it be private or open ? It is better to have an international body do it. Otherwise we look self-righteous. Best thing is to have perfect record in the United States.
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- The U.S. State Department in Argentina was excellent to us. State has an extraordinary group of individuals in a very, very difficult area.