

CONTROL 3105
27 APR 77 1255

DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

→ Return to the Ambassador.
The text is the way we received it. *af*

INDICATE
 COLLECT
 CHARGE TO

FROM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

CLASSIFICATION
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

E.O. 11652:
TAGS:
SUBJECT:
ACTION:

GDS
SHUM PINS ELAB AR *D.C. Unit*
Papal Nuncio comments on Church-State relations and Political/
Human Rights scene *not carefully drafted*

SECSTATE WASHDC

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ BUENOS AIRES 3105

AMB
DCM
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POL/R
ECOM
USIS
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CHRON

for the agenda, will clean up

1. During Ambassador's farewell call on Papal Nuncio Apr 25, latter made following comments: (please protect source):
Massera showed Nuncio copy of a letter
(a) ~~A letter from Massera~~, sent to President Videla and the top Army command by "a group of Argentine army officers" warning Videla to take a harder line against labor, subversion and corruption or face a spontaneous reaction from the troops. The drafters of the letter took credit for the abduction of Light & Power Union leader Oscar Smith several months ago, stating that they had "tried" and executed him.

(b) Nuncio said he had it on good authority that Edgardo Sajon, the head of La Opinion's print shop who was abducted on April 1, had been tortured and killed by his captors. Nuncio thought Sajon had been abducted because of his close personal ties to exPresident Lanusse, but he did not clarify who he thought the killers were. / scandal revelations was to taint Lanusse and destroy him as a political force.

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DRAFTING DATE: 4/26/77 TEL. EXT.: 121

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(c) Nuncio plans to depart this week for visit to Vatican.

He was unhappy with comments that have been circulating to effect that he might not return and that Nunciatura would function indefinitely with a chargé. Nuncio told Ambassador that this decision has yet to be made by the Vatican and he does not know yet what the decision will be.

He told Videla

(d) Admiral Massera told Nuncio that he had been approached by hardliners recently who asked him to ^{lead a} ^{of} take over the government from President Videla. Massera claimed that he refused because he did not have sufficient support within the military to carry out such a scheme.

(e) Nuncio believed that Videla was well intentioned but that he does not have political sensitivity and ~~does not really know what is going on~~ lacks leadership.

(f) Buenos Aires provincial governor St. Jean, who played an instrumental role in the early stages of the Graiver investigation, harbors an old grudge against exPresident Lanusse and has wanted to "get even" for years.

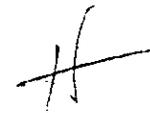
he told Videla

(g) Videla asserted to Nuncio that the Governor of Misiones ^{was} ~~and a State Secretary of Salta~~ (recently removed from office because ~~they were~~ he was considered "fascist" by the government, and that the Governor of Salta was removed because he could not control a fascist. The recently removed Governor of Misiones allegedly has been ^{provincial} /minister. known to say, approvingly, that the US military would overthrow the Carter administration.

2. We have a copy of the circular letter signed anonymously

by "Argentine army officers." However, we have been unable to determine its authenticity thus far. We think there is a fair chance it may have been drafted as a piece of "black propaganda" by others, possibly the Montoneros, but this is only speculation. Missing labor leader Smith had an audience with the Pope sometime in the past and the Church has been playing an active role in attempting to track down leads/^{concern-} ~~cover~~ ing his ~~investments~~ whereabouts and fate. ~~We are surprised that the~~ ~~Nuncio apparently gives the letter credence~~

3. St. Jean's falling out with Lanusse reportedly was over Lanusse's failure to support St. Jean in an intergovernmental dispute while serving as chief of the Army Intelligence Service. St. Jean resigned from the Lanusse govt as a result.



HILL