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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PS by AWG obtained _____ not obt. _____
Date 9-15-76

April 1, 1977

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Arturo Illia, former President of Argentina
Dr. Miguel Angel Zavala Ortiz, ex-Foreign Minister
Dr. Luis Caeiro, former Presidential Press Secretary
Patricia Derian, D/HA
Fernando Rondon, ARA/ECA
Anthony G. Freeman, POL, Amembassy Buenos Aires

PLACE: Dr. Zavala Ortiz' apartment, Buenos Aires

DISTRIBUTION: Ambassador Hill

Dr. Illia (looking ruddy-complexioned and in good health) described the UCRP as a party in the social democratic tradition. Respect for civil rights and human rights was an intrinsic part of the Radicals' political credo. During his administration, 1963-66, there never were any political prisoners, and state of siege was never declared. In sum, the Rule of Law reigned supreme. Unfortunately, this period proved to be a unique respite in recent Argentine political history. This century had seen a series of military dictatorships in Argentina and in Latin America as a whole. Civil rights traditionally had been trampled upon by governments in Argentina. Radical party members often had been the victims of such oppression and, in fact, the Illia government was overthrown by the military. However, military governments had not been the only culprits, since the popularly-elected Peronist regimes were just as bad, or worse.

Illia explained that Jimmy Carter's election was a source of great satisfaction and inspiration for the Radicals, for Argentina and for Latin America. Latin Americans loved J. F. Kennedy because he furthered the cause of democracy in the hemisphere. Illia thought that Carter wanted to move in the same direction of strengthening ties with Latin America and encouraging a new commitment to democracy. He saw Carter's unfurling of the human rights banner in this context and warmly endorsed the President's policy. However, as far as the Argentines were concerned, the return to civilian democratic government and respect for human rights were essentially questions which the Argentines would have to resolve for themselves. Not that the accusation against the US of meddling in Argentina's internal affairs was entirely valid, inasmuch as Argentina had committed itself to respect human rights in international agreements. Perhaps the answer lay in strengthening the commitment of the international community to the principle of human rights and the Rule of Law.

Ms. Derian described President Carter's approach to the problem, both in terms of his personal commitment and his intent as a political leader, to dedicate ourselves to our basic values and make respect for human rights an underlying tenet of our domestic and foreign policy. Ms. Derian asked how we should apply these principles in our approach to Argentina. Zavala Ortiz seized the opportunity to launch into a broad exposition of his views

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concerning the failings of US foreign policy in Argentina and Latin America. The economic security of other peoples, he said in essence, was among the rights traditionally overlooked by the US. During the Illia administration, Argentina had asked for a more effective type of economic cooperation from the US: trade, not aid. Argentina wanted "fair" prices for its exports in order to equal the terms of trade, but the US did not respond adequately. The US used the OAS essentially to advance its own interests.

Ms. Derian asked why the Latin Americans did not create their own organization if they were not entirely satisfied with the OAS. Zavala Ortiz traced the lack of unity among Latin American countries to the independence period when each sought preferential trade ties to Europe instead of with each other. However, the ECLA meeting at Alta Gracia, Argentina, in the early 1960s was a first step toward getting the Latin American nations to form a common position on trade and economic matters, and SELA was a more recent development.

Illia returned the conversation to its main theme. He recognized the value of what President Carter was trying to accomplish universally, emphasizing the need for an internationalization of the concept of the Rule of Law.

Mr. Rondon stated that he had raised the Solari Irigoyen case at the Foreign Ministry and in conversations with the Argentine Ambassador in Washington. Congressman Fraser had taken an active interest in the case, the US government considered it an appropriate matter to take up with the Argentine government, and we would do everything we could to encourage the GOA to effect Solari's release.

Before departing, Zavala Ortiz took Ms. Derian on a brief tour of his apartment. Zavala was proud of the fact that Secretary of State Dean Rusk had dined there years ago.

POL:AGFreeman:jr

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Argentina - Aug 9 Testimony