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10/25

I DISCUSSED THE ACTION MEMO WITH ARGENTINE DESK OFFICER WHITMAN AT 5:00 P.M. HE SAID HE'D GET IT TO ARA'S FRONT OFFICE THURSDAY EVENING. HE ANTICIPATED THAT ARA WOULD SEEK TO RESTORE THE MATERIAL ON P. 4 IN THE ESSENTIAL FACTORS. I SAID WE OPPOSED THIS BUT MIGHT BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH SOME OF IT IF IT WERE REWORDED. GERRY PROMISED TO EXPEDITE THE MATTER.

I GAVE JOHN ZIOLKOWSKI, ED SANDERS' AIDE, A COPY OF OUR VERSION FOR HIS INFO. ~~THE~~ JOHN TOLD ME BOB PASTER WEIGHED IN AGAINST A TIERMAN MEETING W/ THE PRESIDENT.

Pat

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

Change to _____

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Exemptions b () () E.O. 13526 25x () ()

Declassify after _____

With concurrence of: _____

IPS by A obtained _____ not obt. _____

Date 12-2-16

Argentina



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ACTION MEMORANDUM

10/25/79

CONFIDENTIAL

TO: The Secretary
FROM: HA - Patricia M. Derian
ARA - Viron P. Vaky

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ISSUE FOR DECISION

Whether to recommend to the President that he receive Jacobo Timerman during Mr. Timerman's October 30-31 visit to Washington.

ESSENTIAL FACTORS

Jacobo Timerman, former editor and publisher of the Buenos Aires newspaper La Opinion, was jailed, tortured, found innocent of all charges by both the civilian and military courts, released from house arrest on September 25, expelled from Argentina, and stripped of his Argentine nationality. Mr. Timerman joined his family in Israel. He will come to New York on October 29 to accept the Hubert H. Humphrey Freedom Prize awarded to him by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Mr. Timerman will travel to Washington for meetings on October 30 and 31 with Members of Congress and other persons who had worked for his release during his 2-1/2 years of detention.

Mr. Timerman has asked to meet with President Carter in order to thank the President for his and the Administration's efforts on his behalf. The President raised Mr. Timerman's case with President Videla when the latter was in Washington for the Panama Canal Treaties signing ceremony. You also reviewed his case in detail during your visit to

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GDS 10/25/85

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

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Argentina in November, 1977. Under Secretary Newsom and Assistant Secretaries Todman and Derian and others, including especially Ambassador Castro, reiterated our concerns frequently in the interim. Our Embassy reported that senior Argentine military leaders originally voted 6-3 against Timerman's release; to reverse the decision, President Videla, the civilian Minister of Justice, and the entire Supreme Court threatened to resign. Army CINC Viola subsequently told Ambassador Castro that the decision had left deep divisions within the Argentine military.

A few days after Timerman's release, hardline General Benjamin Menendez attempted a coup because, he said, the Videla Government was compromising the goals of the "revolution". Evidence of such compromise, he suggested, included the release of Timerman, the failure to continue the war against "subversives", the expansion of the rule of law, and toleration of court orders returning "subversives to their jobs".

OPTION

Recommend to the President that he receive Mr. Timerman for a brief visit.

Pros

-- For many people in the U.S., Argentina and abroad, Jacobo Timerman's 2-1/2 year detention came to symbolize Argentina's human rights situation. His outspoken criticism of human rights violations made him the country's leading dissident, and his subsequent arbitrary arrest, torture and prolonged detention made him the most prominent victim of human rights abuse. Many regard him as a Latin American parallel to Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov.

-- Within the U.S., strong Congressional and public interest developed in Timerman's case. Numerous articles appeared in the press, including countless editorial columns and an essay by Timerman's son this summer in Newsweek, and important nongovernmental organizations joined their voices in the general protest. His release was front page news in the major dailies.

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-- A meeting with Mr. Timerman would provide the President an opportunity to publicly welcome his release and to reaffirm our Government's hope that it marks the beginning of new moves by the Argentine Government to restore greater respect for human rights and the rule of law.

-- Jewish organizations initiated this request.

-- Such a meeting would also provide fresh public evidence of the Administration's continuing high-level commitment to the promotion of human rights as a central element of U.S. foreign policy.

-- As Mr. Timerman's visit will be the focus of considerable public and press attention in Washington and will include visits to the Congress, a meeting with the President would seem appropriate. If, on the other hand, he is not received at the White House, the omission will be widely noted.

Cons

An audience for Timerman with the President will likely:

-- seriously irritate Argentine leaders and further complicate the position of moderates within the regime who are seeking progress on human rights;

-- intensify the probability of an increase in anti-semitism in Argentina because of increased publicity and credence a meeting with the President would give to Timerman's condemnatory statements;

-- jeopardize our effectiveness on other important human rights cases by reducing U.S. influence and close avenues of approach on U.S. representations; and

-- strengthen the GOA's conviction that positive reaction to U.S. approaches, such as took place in the Timerman case, will ultimately work to Argentina's disadvantage.

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Argentina (2 of 4)