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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: March 31, 1977
TIME: 17:15 - 18:25
PLACE: LA OPINION
PARTICIPANTS: Mrs. Patricia Derian
Mr. Fred Rondon
Mr. Jacobo Timerman, Editor/Publisher of
LA OPINION
Mr. Hector Timerman, youngest son (23) of Jacobo
Mr. Enrique Jara, Managing Editor, LA OPINION
Mr. Michael O'Brien, Press Officer, USIS
Buenos Aires

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
 Release Excise Deny
Exemption(s): _____
Declassify: In Part In Full
 Classify as ___ Extend as ___ Downgrade to ___
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

In the course of a one hour and ten minute meeting, Jacobo Timerman made the following points:

He thanked President Carter for his human rights policy adding that the human rights issue has broken the mold that has characterized East-West relations (the cold war syndrome) since World War II. The U.S. has taken the ideological initiative.

In
The Argentine case is atypical. /Chile, Brazil, Uruguay the civilian governments were inept but didn't violate human rights. The military regimes that overthrew them did violate them. In Argentina the civilian government was guilty of extensive human rights violations and the military government is doing no more than its civilian predecessor in this field.

The U.S. should strongly defend its principles but vary its tactics according to the local situation.

There are three types of Argentine military officers. The intelligent ones accept the reality of U.S. human rights policy and will try and absorb the policy and restructure Argentina's relations with the U.S. accordingly. The fools (imbeciles) think that the Carter Administration and the Pentagon are separate and they are talking to the Pentagon. Some even say that the U.S. military should get rid of Carter. Many other officers feel that human rights was candidate Carter's policy and President Carter will see things differently. There should be no double message.

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The subversives' greatest victory has been convincing the military that their tactics (terror, torture) are the right ones. The progressive military officers have made supersonic advances (by Argentine standards) in winning acceptance for greater human rights protection. They are advancing one millimeter per week.

If the Argentine situation keeps going as it is now, we will have civil war and the Montoneros will win. But if the government can defeat both the leftist-fascists and the right-wing fanatics, Argentina will be an example for the world.

Send us a great Ambassador. He must be strong. Not a career man. Again, no double message.

When queried about the advisability of applying the Harkin amendment to U.S. multilateral lending, Mr. Timerman replied that the U.S. must apply it to remain consistent in its human rights policy. To do otherwise would only confuse human rights supporters and encourage those who question U.S. dedication to the cause. But just casting negative vote isn't enough. U.S. must do something positive. For example, establish the right of a country to appeal. This would create a dialog on human rights with the offending country.

It is not easy to be democratic and defend human rights in Argentina today. For example, the Interior Ministry recently complained that LA OPINION was giving too much coverage to Habeas Corpus petitions filed with local courts. Soon after Timerman rejected this complaint LA OPINION's court reporter completely vanished and has not reappeared. Timerman added that he knows the government is preparing to denounce him as a communist and the "voice of subversion" and take some "drastic action" (he did not specify) in the next few months. He concluded by observing that if he were to be killed by leftists it would merit only a small story in U.S. press. But if right-wing para-military did him in it would be front page news for weeks.

The United States must denounce human rights violations on both sides to maintain credibility. Many Argentines question American sincerity when it appears that the U.S. is mostly interested in denouncing right-wing terrorism.

USIS:AIO:MO'Brien:vp

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