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Buenos Aires

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March 28, 1979

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OFFICIAL-INFORMAL

Claus W. Ruser, Esquire
Director, East Coast Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
 Release () Excise () Deny
Exemption(s): _____
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Dear Claus:

IAHRC Visit

Your March 9 letter enclosed a memorandum by Irv Tragen suggesting that the Argentines are trying to stall the IAHRC visit. Our horse-back opinion is that the GOA continues committed to the visit and all the internal indications show that they are continuing with preparations for the May 29th date. As you know from the previous history of this affair there are many people within the GOA who would like to sidetrack the visit if they thought they could get away with it, but we do not believe that indicators of their scheming should be indicative of a change of the GOA commitment. What we were concerned about recently was a lead editorial in La Prensa which condemned the visit saying that Argentina should solve her own problems and avoid visiting inspectors. On checking into this editorial we found it to be consistent with La Prensa's long-standing position on such matters and consequently not necessarily in conflict with La Prensa's relatively fine human rights record (second only to the Herald).

Epstein and the ADL

We do not know why Mr. Epstein was so assured that disappearances were continuing at 50 per month. Our information continues to show a remarkable decrease and I think we should give careful thought to what we might do to recognize the achievements of those who have finally achieved this improvement.

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"Soft Targets"

The thesis that the security apparatus has turned to soft targets originated primarily in some of Tex Harris' conversations with several security officers who make the Embassy their beat. At this point we have little to say on the point other than that in the absence of the ERP and the Montoneros, those people would be unemployed if they did not study some possible threats to the regime. Since disappearances for the moment seem to be near zero the whole targeting question is moot. I have some other logical problems with it, since by definition many "soft targets" have been disappearing over the past year, as the numbers of those picked up far exceed the number of known remaining terrorists or active subversives. The whole question of clandestine prisoners was given a thorough review by the Country Team on March 26 and the results will be reported separately after a later meeting. As we will be reporting, we have received reports that the counter-subversive teams have been broken up in several jurisdictions and these reports are now solidly confirmed.

Statistics

I have asked the Political Section to come up with the definitions you requested of disappearances. We hope that the need for this data may be overcome by events just like the information about soft targets. As disappearances drop to near zero, we will have to be far more careful than in the past to be sure that they are not the result of criminal activities or other non-governmental causes.

IFI Votes

From our perspective in Buenos Aires the Department's behavior on the Railroad II vote in the IBRD seemed inappropriate. In the face of the most favorable development we could have hoped for -- cessation of disappearances -- the reaction was a harsh indictment of the GOA rather

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than some more positive expression. I am puzzled that they were not more puzzled.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Maxwell Chaplin

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