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Page: 1  
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Case Number: 200000044

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 00607 261457Z  
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 DHA-02 IO-13 NEA-10 SSO-00  
NSCE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-01  
DODE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SY-05 SCA-01 MCT-01  
EUR-12 PRS-01 FBIE-00 TRSE-00 /093 W

-----261512Z 052441 /46

O 261320Z JAN 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8735

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)  
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS  
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 0607

( ) Release (X) Excise ( ) Deny  
Exemption(s): B-1

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, AR  
SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS PERSECTUION IN ARGENTINA

Declassify: (X) In Part ( ) In Full  
(X) Classify as C ( ) Extend as    ( ) Downgrade to     
Date 4/26/01 Declassify on    Reason 25X1

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 0458, (B) STATE 012873, (C) BUENOS AIRES 7930,  
(D) BUENOS AIRES 6395, (E) BUENOS AIRES 5752, (F) BUENOS AIRES  
8403

1. SUMMARY. THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW RECENT ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS.  
JEWISH LEADERS DO NOT CONSIDER THEM TO REPRESENT "SIGINIFICANT  
UPSURGE" AND ARE NOT ALARMED. "LA OPINION" EDITOR TIMERMAN, HOW-  
EVER, HAS EXPRESSED TO EMBOFFS NEW CONCERN AS TO THE FUTURE. TO  
EMBASSY'S KNOWLEDGE THERE HAVE BEEN NO ARRESTS OF CATHOLIC  
PRIESTS SINCE TWO WERE RELEASED ON DECEMBER 24 (BUENOS AIRES  
8403). EMBASSY HAS NO INFO ON NATIONALIST SOCIALIST FRONT. IT  
MAY WELL BE DUMMY ORGANIZATION. END SUMMARY.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS ROUND-UP NO. 9 (BUENOS AIRES 0458), WHICH  
INCLUDED REPORTS ON RECENT ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS, MUST HAVE  
CROSSED REFTEL B. MOST JEWISH LEADERS HERE (INCLUDING ISRAELI  
AMBASSADOR, WHO SAW AMBASSADOR HILL ON JANUARY 12) CONTINUE TO  
EXPRESS THE OPINION THAT THERE IS NO RPT NO ALARMING INCREASE IN  
MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN ARGENTINA, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE  
CONCERNED AND WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION CLOSELY.

PAGE 02 BUENOS 00607 261457Z

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 1

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: n/a  
Document Number: 1977BUENOS00607

Page: 2  
Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200000044

ACTING HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF ARGENTINE-ISRAELI ASSOCIATIONS (DAIA) MANFREDO BAUMATZ (PROTECT) TOLD EMBOFF TODAY (JANUARY 25) THAT ANTI-SEMITIC LITERATURE IN LA PLATA SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED LAST WEEK FOLLOWING NEGATIVE EXPOSURE IN THE PRESS (LA OPINION). HE SAID THE MATERIAL DISAPPEARED BEFORE THE DAIA HAD TIME TO FORMULATE AN OFFICIAL PROTEST, WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO GOVERNMENT'S SENSIVITY ON THE SUBJECT. BAUMATZ ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE MOTIVE BEHIND THE CORDOBA THEATER BOMBING REMAINS UNCLEAR. THE FILM "VICTORY AT ENTEBBE" HAD INDEED BEEN PLAYING IN THE THEATER FOR THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE BOMBING, ASNI HAD IN CINEMAS ALL OVER ARGENTINA, BUT THOSE MOST PREJUDICED BY THE BOMBING WERE OWNERS OF 80 SHOPS DESTROYED IN THE BLAST; VERY FEW OF WHOM WERE JEWISH. IN SUM, HE DID NOT SEE ANY PARTICULAR CAUSE FOR ALARM OVER THE RECENT INCIDENTS. BAUMATZ LEAVES FOR MIAMI LATER THIS WEEK ON VACATION AND SAID SHOULD HE BE IN CONTACT WITH AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, HE WILL URGE CALM OVER JEWISH SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT NOW PLAN TO GO TO WASHINGTON, HE REQUESTED NAME OF CONTACT IN STATE DEPARTMENT AND WE GAVE HIM NAME OF FRED RONDON.)

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, JACOBO TIMERMAN, INFLUENTIAL JEWISH DIRECTOR OF "LA OPINION", GAVE EMBOFFS YESTERDAY (JANUARY 24) STARKER VIEW THAN ONE HE HAS EXPRESSED PREVIOUSLY ON THE ISSUE (BUENOS AIRES 6395). INDEED, IT WAS TRADITIONALLY INCLUDED VERY NATIONALISTIC, RIGHT-WING AND IN SOME CASES, STRONGLY ANTI-SEMITIC ELEMENTS, WHICH ARE PARTICULARLY PREVALENT IN THE ARMED FORCES. (HERE HE MENTIONED HARD-LINE SECTORS IN THE ARMY AND NAVY; AND PRACTICALLY THE ENTIRE AIR FORCE, WHICH HE SAID WAS STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY GERMANS DURING SECOND WORLD WAR). SOME OF THESE PEOPLE NOW ENJOY HIGH POSITIONS OF POWER, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF INTERNAL SECURITY. IN ORDER TO FIGHT SUBVERSION, THEY WERE GIVEN EXTRAORDINARY FREEDOM AND IMMUNITY TO FIGHT THE WAR IN THEIR OWN WAY. HOW, AS THE HIGHLY EMOTIONAL AND SCARCELY CONTROLLED" WAR AGAINST SUBVERSION BEGINS TO WIND DOWN THESE ELEMENTS ARE TURNING THEIR ENERGIES TO POLITICAL REPRESSION. ONE OF THE TARGETS IS THE JEWISH COMMUNITY, ALTHOUGH IT ALSO CAN AND DOES INCLUDE

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 00607 261457Z

OTHER GROUPS: JOURNALISTS, PROFESSORS, INTELLECTUALS, ETC. THOSE GROUPS THAT HAVE BEEN VARIOUSLY CALLED PARAMILITARY, PARAPOLICE, RIGHT-WING TERRORISTS, FREELANCE DEATH SQUADS, ETC., ARE ALL IN SOME WAY CONNCTED TO THE SECURITY FORCES, AND CONTINUE TO ENJOY WIDE LATITUDE. ALTHOUGH GENERAL

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 2

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: n/a  
Document Number: 1977BUENOS00607

Page: 3

Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200000044

MENENDEZ IN CORDOBA PROBABLY DID NOT AUTHORIZE THE BOMBING, TIMERMAN CONTINUED, HIS CONTROL OVER THE AREA IS SUCH THAT HE IS NO DOUBT ABLE TO FIND OUT WHO DID IT IF HE WANTS. IT IS MORE LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT HE ISN'T CONCERNED TO STOP THE RIGHT-WING "FREELANCERS" FROM THEIR "ANTICS" OR EVEN TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE INCIDENT. VIDELA ISN'T ACCORDING TO TIMERMAN. STRONG ENOUGH TO INTERFERE WITH OTHER GENERALS' OPERATIONS IN THEIR OWN AREAS OF COMMAND. ALSO, IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT NONE OF THE MILITARY SENSE THE STRONG INTERNATIONAL, AND PARTICULARLY AMERICAN, REACTION AGAINST WHAT ARE SEEN AS ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS IN ARGENTINA.

4. TIMERMAN IS, OF COURSE, A MERCURIAL PERSONALITY AND HIS VIEWS SHOULD BE READ WITH THAT IN MIND. NONETHELESS, HIS COMMENTS REINFORCE EMBASSY AND OTHER SOURCES' VIEW THAT ANTI-SEMITISM IS NOT A SEPARATE, UNIQUE ISSUE; THAT THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE A WELL-ORGANIZED, TOP-LEVEL CAMPAIGN BEING WAGED SPECIFICALLY AGAINST JEWS. BUT, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OCCURRING IN THE COUNTRY, JEWS ARE BEING HARASSED TO SOME EXTENT (ALONG WITH OTHER GROUPS) BY FREE-WHEELING, UNRESTRAINED RIGHT-WING AGENTS. IF, AS TIMERMAN SUGGESTS, THESE ELEMENTS CANNOT BE CHECKED AS THE WAR AGAINST SUBVERSION COMES CLOSER TO BEING WON, THE INCIDENCE OF ATTACKS AGAINST JEWS, ALLEGED IDEOLOGICAL INFILTRATORS, ETC., CAN BE EXPECTED TO RISE.

5. EMBASSY SOURCES CONTINUE TO DISCOUNT THE EXISTENCE OF A SPECIFIC GROUP OR MOVEMENT CALLED THE NATIONALIST SOCIALIST FRONT. THE GROUP SURFACED ONLY ONCE IN 1976 CLAIMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOME BOMB ATTACKS LAST AUGUST (BUENOS AIRES 5752).

[REDACTED] NO INFORMATION ON ALLEGED GROUP THEN, NOR DOES IT HAVE [REDACTED] (b1)

PAGE 04 BUENOS 00607 261457Z

ANYTHING NEW TO REPORT NOW. ANTI-SEMITIC SENTIMENT EXISTS IN VARIOUS DEGREES WITHIN THE SECURITY FORCES AND THE GENERAL POPULATION AS WELL; GROUPINGS ARE FLUID AND HAVE IN THE PAST TAKEN ON FOR A TIME QUITE A NUMBER OF NAMES, ONLY ONE OF THEM BEING THE NATIONALIST SOCIALIST FRONT. (THE AAA IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF A LOOSE GROUPING OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS WHO OPERATE SEPARATELY, APPARENTLY IN CONNECTION WITH SECURITY FORCES WHEN NECESSARY, BUT WITHOUT ANY CENTRAL ORGANIZATION, HIERARCHY OR LEADERSHIP.)

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 3

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: n/a  
Document Number: 1977BUENOS00607

Page: 4  
Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200000044

6. SINCE BANNING SOME TITLES AND CLOSING DOWN THE "MILICIA" PUBLISHING HOUSE IN SEPTEMBER, THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT HAS MADE NO MORE PUBLIC STATEMENTS CONCERNING ANTI-SEMITIC ACTS IN THE COUNTRY. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, VISIBLE INDICATIONS THAT IT HAS SOUGHT TO RESPOND TO CRITICISM: ANTI-SEMITIC LITERATURE IS CONSIDERABLY LESS VISIBLE IN BUENOS AIRES AND HAS APPARENTLY DISAPPEARED FRO LA PLATA AND, EXCEPT FOR THE EVENTS OF EARLY JANUARY, ATTACKS AGAINST JEWISH ESTABLISHMENTS HAD CEASED ALMOST ENTIRELY. THE MAJOR PUBLIC REACTION HAS BEEN THE RENEWED VIGOR OF SOME OF THE PRESS, MOST NOTABLY "LA OPINION" AND THE CORDOBA PAPER "VOZ DEL INTERIOR," CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION AND CLARIFICATION OF RIGHT-WING TERRORIST ACTIVITIES.

7. AS FOR THE WHOLE QUESION OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION, THERE HAVE BEEN NO NEW INCIDENTS INVOLVING CATHOLIC PRIESTS SINCE THE RELEASE OF TWO ON DECEMBER 24 (BUENOS AIRES 8403). AT THAT TIME, THE CATHOLIC INFORMATION SERVICE ANNOUNCED THERE WERE NO PRIESTS OR MEMBERS OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN DETENTION IN ARGENTINA. THE ONLY OTHER DEVELOPMENT IS THAT GOA BANNED THE DIVINE LIGHT MISSION RELIGIOUS SECT ON JANUARY 20. EMBASSY KNOWS OF NO REACTION TO THAT MOVE YET.

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Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 4

UNCLASSIFIED