

Argentina

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deception

10/12/77

DECAPIIONED

Timerman

released 1979

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

AK 001

Participants: Rabbi Marshall Meyer
Rector of the Rabbinical Seminary of Latin America

F. Allen Harris
Political Officer
U.S. Embassy, Buenos Aires

Subject: Jacobo Timerman

Date: October 13, 1977

Rabbi Meyer had an hour meeting with Mr. Timerman, imprisoned editor of La Opinion, on October 11. Following is the account of that meeting in the order related by the Rabbi:

Rabbi Meyer was allowed to see Mr. Timerman from 11 to 12 AM on October 11 at the federal police station on calle Moreno. He had an easy time getting in.

Timerman had been "beaten" and "punched around" four weeks ago in the Armed Forces prison in Magdalena (Buenos Aires Province). However, Timerman said it was nothing compared to what he had gotten before (which according to Rabbi Meyer included 15 hours of torture with an electric prod while being questioned about his Jewish and zionist connections).

Timerman is frightened about the reaction of the "Fascists" when they learn that the government has nothing to hold him on. (This was announced on September 15, 1977.) Timerman emphasized the importance of the U.S. Government's interest in his case in keeping him alive.

Timerman is currently sharing a cell with the ex-director of Channel 13, Buenos Aires TV. (Name not remembered.) He has been in the federal police jail at calle Moreno since the first of the month.

Timerman has been told that the government has nothing against him. He is still under the jurisdiction of the military system of justice but "at any moment would be put under PEN". Timerman sees his military lawyer but is not allowed to have private counsel.

Timerman's spirits are excellent. He has books. His mind is alert. He looks fat, but that is due to the high starch diet which he is fed. Rabbi Meyer had discussed earlier a program of isometrics and exercises with Timerman. Timerman is exercising daily in his cell to keep his strength up.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S20000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Declassify: () In Part () In Full

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Timerman was held "next to the torture room in Magdalena prison". He heard people scream day and night and on several occasions he heard screams of "no soy judio" (but, I'm not Jewish). Timerman witnessed dead people being removed. He also spoke of the entire family of a former state minister under Governor Calabro (previous Peronist governor of Buenos Aires Province) being tortured -- including the wife, the children, and their servant. People were tortured with electric shock until they were unconscious. The girls were "used sexually".

Timerman while in Magdalena was confined in a tunnel for 3 weeks. The tunnel was so narrow that he was unable to stand and he could not fully extend his arms even when bent at the elbow. Timerman commented that it was crazy in Magdalena, "Timerman said as a Jew they tortured me". However, Timerman feels quite safe in the police jail in Moreno street in Buenos Aires, "here they don't touch me", he said, "I'm safe here". Timerman said the he was "kidnapped" previously without any proper order from the city jail when he was taken to Magdalena prison.

Timerman asked Rabbi Meyer to please "keep the heat on in Washington" because some of the "Fascists" are so furious that they couldn't prove anything against me, they might lose their patience. "You have no idea of the anti-Semitism," he said. In Magdalena, they took his Jewish prayer book (Siddur) away from him but it was returned when he complained directly to the head of the prison.

When he was locked up in his tunnel cell he asked one of the guards where east was, the guard asked why he wanted to know. Timerman replied that he wanted to face Jerusalem when he said his prayers. The guard checked and returned with the answer that he couldn't tell Timerman which way, was east for security reasons. Timerman and the Rabbi laughed at the story as in the tunnel cell in which he was imprisoned Timerman could neither stand nor roll over.

Embassy Comment: Timerman's discussion with Rabbi Meyer confirms again that Timerman was previously badly tortured and provides another account of the anti-Semitic Nazi culture among the torture cadres in the Argentine security forces. What is new and disturbing is that Timerman was placed in a cell adjacent to the torture facilities in Magdalena prison. This probably was done as a psychological torture against him; however, it also means that he is a firsthand auditor to torture within an established Argentine military penal facility. Were he granted his freedom, and if he should decide to speak, as an articulate spokesman and a Jew, these firsthand revelations by a credible non-Marxist newspaper editor would provide an irrefutable account of actual torture within an Argentine prison. This would further seriously damage the military Junta's international image.

The Timerman family is optimistic that he will soon be released. There are reports that a decree has been signed freeing him "for insufficiency of proof." Given the fact that Timerman has been tortured himself and forced to listen to others being tortured, and made to witness the results, there

October 13, 1977

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Page 3

will certainly be strong arguments within the Argentine military against releasing such a potentially effective anti-Junta spokesperson.

CAVEAT: Information in this MEMCON, if released, would not only harm the U.S. national security but would seriously endanger Mr. Timmerman's chances of release. Please treat strictly as NODIS.

CC: Chargé - Chaplin
POL - Hallman
APA/ECA - Rondon
HRH - Derian ✓
APA - Lister

J
POL:FAHarris:eg

October 18, 1977

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