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**US FOREIGN POLICY AND
A MILITARY REGIME IN ARGENTINA**



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US FOREIGN POLICY
AND A MILITARY REGIME
IN ARGENTINA.

by

⑩ David C. Jordan

⑪ 15 October 1977

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FOREWORD

This memorandum was presented at the Military Policy Symposium sponsored by the Strategic Studies Institute and held at the US Army War College in early 1977. Under the general theme "Inter-American Security and the United States," a broad range of issues affecting US relations in the Latin American region were addressed. This paper considers the political situation in Argentina and explores the circumstantial and normative reasons for not classifying the Videla government as illegitimate when placed in the context of classical political theory.

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This memorandum is being published as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. The data and opinions presented are those of the author and in no way imply the endorsement of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



DeWITT C. SMITH, JR.
Major General, USA
Commandant
1 June 1977

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DR. DAVID C. JORDAN is Professor and Chairman, Woodrow Wilson Department of Government and Foreign Affairs, University of Virginia. He is the author of *Nationalism in Contemporary Latin America* (with Whitaker), *World Politics in Our Time*, and of numerous scholarly articles. He is a member of the Research Council of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, member of the Board of Research Consultants, Institute of Foreign Policy Analysis, and a member of the Editorial Board of *Orbis*.

US FOREIGN POLICY AND A MILITARY REGIME IN ARGENTINA

Soviet foreign policy has developed a new military-political dimension since the successful Russo-Cuban intervention in Angola.¹ The new Soviet international tactic is that of accelerating the Marxist dominated national liberation movement through the interjection of Cuban troops into a guerrilla insurgency situation. In Soviet perspective a national liberation movement is a just war and authorizes, under the proper conditions, the use of Soviet or its allies' forces. From the Soviet viewpoint it is legitimate for a Marxist guerrilla force to invite in foreign troops even if the insurgency movement is not in control of the country as the MPLA was not in Angola.

There are two key political variables for that tactic to be successful. First the regime or factions resisting the Marxist liberation forces must be politically discredited in the west. Second, all the most likely allies of the regime resisting the Marxist forces must be politically inhibited from using their military to reinforce the threatened country.

In Latin America only two states have a military capability superior in quantity, and possibly in quality, to the forces Cuba now possesses. These two states are Brazil and Argentina. It appears in the case of Argentina that the Marxist political attack on the new Videla regime is

not to create the conditions where guerrilla forces within Argentina can invite in the Cubans but rather to discredit the military regime so that, should a Cuban intervention occur elsewhere in Latin America, the Argentine military support for the beleaguered country would not be politically acceptable, particularly in the United States and the OAS.

These circumstances make it imperative that the nature of the regime in Argentina be understood and properly evaluated in the United States. There are international motivations behind the attack on the Argentine government, there are beliefs within the United States hostile in general to military regimes, and there are potentially serious consequences for the US security interests in Latin America if the Cubans but not the Argentines are considered justified in using their military forces. How then is the new regime in Argentina to be understood? Is it a tyranny justifying US condemnation and obloquy? The acceptability of a regime depends on the circumstances from which it arises and its approximation to those standards to which it can be held given its origin, present circumstances and ends. US foreign policy toward diverse regimes must be guided by standards which can differentiate between regimes from those most defective to those which are tolerable approximations to the best standards given their circumstances.

THE FALL OF ISABEL

On March 24, 1976 the Argentine armed forces ousted Juan D. Perón's widow, María Estela Martínez de Perón-Isabel, in a carefully planned and brilliantly executed coup d'état. The military junta taking power was headed by General Jorge Videla and included Admiral Emilio Massera and Air Force General Orlando R. Agosti. In announcing the takeover the Junta said in part: "Having exhausted all available constitutional mechanisms and (having) passed beyond the possibility of rectification within the institutional framework, having been proved irrefutably the impossibility of recuperation through the natural channels, a situation which afflicted the nation and compromised its future has come to an end."

The first actions of the government in dismantling the old Peronist order were to suppress all trade union and political activity, to dissolve the national, provincial and municipal legislatures, to sack the Perón appointed justices of the Supreme Court and to appoint new provincial administrators. It was also announced that all subversives would be

tried in military courts and that the death penalty was in force for convicted terrorists. These steps were announced as just the beginning in the government's effort to prevent anarchy, corruption, and subversion and to reverse the nation's economic decline. The underlying reasons for the coup were to be found in the deterioration of the economy, the breakup of the Peronist government and movement, the continuing terroristic sedition, and the widespread social decay represented by massive corruption and symbolized by the destruction of the universities as centers of learning. All these factors were important to the military not only in themselves but also as they undermined the nation's national security. With the unabated growth of Brazil since 1964, the Argentine military faced the permanent inferiority of their nation if the domestic situation could not be reversed.

ECONOMIC DETERIORATION

The magnitude of the Peronist regime's mismanagement of the economy is almost beyond belief. In 1974, inflation rose to 40.1 percent, some 10 percent above Argentina's "usual" 30 percent rate. This increase occurred in the first year after the government installed wage and price controls which produced even more distortions in the economy. When Isabel's Rasputin, the astrologer José López Rega, attempted to take some corrective measures in mid 1975—e.g., repeal of the absentee clause of the labor law, grant permission for state-owned enterprises to charge prices covering costs, encourage foreign investment, curtail the budget deficit and the like—the effort collapsed. Subsequently, Antonio Cafiero began his stint in the Ministry of Economy and the situation deteriorated further. The rate of inflation rose to 334.8 percent in 1975. The state had a huge deficit, 408 percent above that of 1974. In 1970—a "normal" year of inflation—80.5 percent of government expenditures were covered by taxation, in 1975 only 25 percent were covered. Under Cafiero, wage increases of 155 percent were granted and an additional year end wage bonus was decreed. The rate of inflation had risen to 566.3 percent in the year ending March 1976. If the March 1976 rate had continued the rest of that year, the 1976 rate would have been 4,670.3 percent. That rate was higher than Chile's under Allende just before he was ousted.

Because of the government's dependency on organized labor it was unable and unwilling to resist union wage demands. The wage pull

aspects of Argentine inflation come then from the workers' ever rising expectations that government would meet their demands whether or not they were justified and despite the consequences for other sectors of society.

Wage increases were not justified across the board. In 1975, despite the massive inflation with its stimulation of demand, the gross domestic product fell 1.4 percent in real terms. Marked declines occurred in construction (9 percent), mining (14.3 percent), wood manufactures (12.7 percent), and capital goods (8.1 percent). Other declines occurred in basic metal products, food, drink, tobacco, paper, chemicals and agriculture. Positive growth rates were registered only in a few areas such as the textile and leather industries. The trade deficit in 1974 was \$51 million and had risen to \$791 million in 1975. This deficit arose despite the fact that Argentina had become a tourist's paradise. The external debt had risen to nearly \$9 billion of which nearly \$3-1/2 billion were due in 1976.

The unemployment problem was disguised by a massive increase in the bureaucracy. Hence the modern formula of the populist regime for economic catastrophe and disorder was in place: inflation plus disguised unemployment undermining saving and capital formation, debasing the currency through printing and circulating more money than was justified by the tax revenues of the state, and consequently collapsing the country's financial system and destroying its financial reserves.

THE FRAGMENTATION OF PERONISM

The Peronist concept of legitimacy is based on the radical theory of democracy. Popular enthusiasm measured by a majority vote or by national referendums provide the leader with complete legitimacy in this view. Any current majority allows the radical democrat to decide what his powers are and provides no limit on how he uses them. The constitutionalist view is that all majority regimes are limited by long-term principles. The key concept of constitutionalism, that antecedent and enforceable rules of law can check the policies of a popular leader, is not part of the radical democratic theory of politics. Indeed one of the first things Juan D. Perón did upon his return to power in 1973 was to debase constitutionalism by undermining judicial authority. Many judges throughout the court system, including justices of the Supreme Court, resigned when Perón returned. They did so under the sweet inducements of high pensions and the subtle threats of

dismissal if they did not resign. Many who then filled these vacant posts were underqualified at best and some had little, if any, professional qualifications at all. The result was the institutional breakdown of the judicial system and the perversion of the universal and classless constitutional idea of the rule of law. Perón's idea of the dominance of the leader was extended to the Congress and all Perón's followers there were expected to follow blindly the leader. This doctrine was known as verticalism and Perón's, and then his wife's, blind followers were known as verticalists.

The politics of bringing Perón to power had required, however, more than just the support of his core followers (those expressing personal support for Perón).² A traditional ideological conflict divides Argentina across class and regional lines. One is the conservative-liberal view and the other is the nationalist-populist line. Both ideological traditions have left-right-center positions. Perón had developed his appeal in the nationalist-populist tradition and had forged a political coalition—the Frente Justicialista de Liberación, FREJULI—which attracted a number of parties to supporting him and his party and movement from that tradition. It was this general backing which gave him the Presidency. After his death on July 1, 1974, his wife, who had been elected as Vice President, succeeded him to the Presidency.

Mrs. Perón not only found it more and more difficult to hold the FREJULI coalition together but also discovered she could not hold together even the verticalists. By December, 1975, such important FREJULI members as former President Frondizi's Movement for Integration and Development (MID) had left. At the same time the division within the core Peronists was severe. On the extreme left within Peronism in open opposition to Isabel was the Partido Autentico led by Andres Framini and supporting Perón's former stalking horse for the Presidency, Hector Campora. It was an open secret that Framini supported the left wing Peronist guerrilla movement, the Montoneros, and he was finally arrested in February, 1976, with 40 other leaders of the Authentic Party. In the center of Peronism but also opposing Isabel on antiverticalist grounds was Victorio Calabro, governor of Buenos Aires province. He had some labor support and was also backed by the Buenos Aires provincial police, the second police establishment in the country—only the Federal Police force was larger. Isabel could not oust him without the Federal Police and the army and they would not help her intervene against him.

By the end of 1975 Isabel was supported chiefly by the

“entourage”—the group of advisors headed by López Rega and, since his ouster in June 1975 over his failure to introduce economic reforms, run by his son-in-law, Raúl Lastiri; the technical secretary to the Presidency, Dr. Julio González; and Isabel’s physician, Dr. Omar Vaquir. These leaders of verticalism could no longer count on a verticalist majority in Congress either after January 1976.

Without understanding or supporting a constitutionalist view of democracy, the loss of majority support within Peronism and FREJULI meant that the ruling principle of Peronist government had lost its *raison d’être*: the Peronist regime was no longer ruling legitimately within its own value framework. Isabel was reduced to relying on the last bastion for the legitimization of verticalist Peronism—organized labor. Her chief supporter in labor, Lorenzo Miguel of the Union Obrera Metalúrgica, considered forming a labor party but the benefits from the redistribution of wealth in Argentina to labor through inflation were no longer effective and Union leaders were losing the support of their factory floor members. Peronism had, therefore, disintegrated internally by early 1976. Finally, the principal non-Peronist party, the Radical Party, did not support the government even though it proposed populist policies similar to those of the Peronists. Furthermore, the Radicals themselves were divided. There was then by early 1976 no support within the major parties of the nationalist populist tradition to sustain the government should the military move against it.

TERRORISTIC SEDITION

In modern times the initial threat to constitutionalist and even to populist regimes comes from the left. By means of conscious seditious activity Communist and other left wing terrorists are initially successful in making themselves seem respectable. This preparatory effort is most effective among those who talk about the redistribution of wealth, the role of multinational corporations, the imperialism of the United States, and tried bourgeois prejudices, e.g., work, education, duty, ethics, shame, honor, tolerance and the like. This left is consciously seditious in that it prepares discord among the people, rejects the unity of law and the idea of the common good and undermines belief in universalistic standards of justice which apply to all.

The seeds of Argentine sedition and terrorism go back to the late 1950’s and early 1960’s.³ Peronist terrorism was designed to bring

Perón back to power whereas the Communist-backed-and-trained terrorists opposed Perón after his successful return and sought to bring about a Marxist-Leninist state. The Communist left was principally made up of ERP (the People's Revolutionary Army) and FAR (the Armed Revolutionary Forces). The key leaders of both these Communist terrorist organizations had been trained in Cuba. Upon Perón's return in mid-1973, ERP—even though it had worked with terrorist groups seeking to bring Perón back—immediately went into opposition to the Peronist regime. ERP has murdered scores of people. FAR fused with the Peronist terrorist organization, the Montoneros, in late 1973. The Montoneros had already been partially infiltrated by members (section 8) of the National Liberation Army—the parent organization of both ERP and FAR. Some believe that these infiltrators were able to help turn the Montoneros against the regime of Isabel after Perón's death. Army intelligence seemed to operate on this principle as the army publicly offered from time to time to cooperate with the non-Marxist members of the Montoneros.

The experience of mankind with terror is that it produces counterterror. Argentina proved to be no exception to that experience. The principal counterterror terrorist organization is the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance, AAA. The triple A was set up through the López Rega run Ministry of Social Welfare. Apparently López Rega had Jorge Conti, a presidential secretary, organize the triple A on the cell principle. The main charges and evidence for this origin of the triple A were made by Horacio Paino and were published in *La Opinión* on February 12, 1976. After the March coup very substantial amounts of arms were found in the Ministry of Social Welfare. The main right wing terrorist allies of the triple A are the Comandos Libertadores de América (CLA) and the Comando Fuerzas Conjuntas (CFC). It is alleged that the CLA was organized by former associates of Juan Carlos Onganía. According to *La Prensa*, between May 25, 1973, and March 24, 1976, the terrorist organizations had assassinated 1,358 people. The *La Prensa* breakdown of those killed was 66 from the armed forces, 136 provincial police, 34 Federal Police, 445 subversives and 677 civilians including women and children. Those, like the writer, who have had to listen for years to the excuses, romanticisms and justifications for left wing terrorist murderers and then the equally mindless excuses for right wing terrorism welcomed the January 1976 *La Prensa* report that everyone now speaks against terrorism. It was estimated that the guerrillas had killed over a thousand people since 1968 and, as *La*

Prensa noted, they had been called "our marvelous youth." Despite its failure in obtaining power for itself, left wing terrorism produced senseless and excessive reactions which also prepared the way for the March coup.

SOCIAL DECAY

The main feature of Argentine's social decay was the massive and pervasive corruption which penetrated every sector of society and the highest reaches of the government. Wage-price controls, the Peronist decreed Social Pact, undoubtedly fostered corruption within society. The result of the price-wage controls was to stimulate a massive black market. People who took advantage of the black market were far better able to take care of themselves than those who did not. Shortages of all sorts could be overcome by going to the blackmarket. And the people knew too that they were not primarily responsible for the shortages. Most of those resorting to the blackmarket blamed the government's lack of fiscal and monetary restraint for the situation. The result was much like Prohibition in the United States, only on an even more massive scale.

Within the government, José López Rega's Ministry of Social Welfare was believed to be guilty of a monumental misuse of funds. These charges included the President herself. Mrs. Perón claimed a Ministry check for 700 thousand pesos bearing her signature was "mistakenly" deposited to her account. It was also charged that Mrs. Perón had misappropriated one billion pesos which had been raised for flood victims in Jujuy, Salta and Santiago del Estero. Although subsequently the Congress dropped the case against Mrs. Perón, it was widely believed that she was guilty of transferring over \$.5 million from public charity funds to her personal account. She may still be tried on these charges under the Junta. The Peronist idea that the public treasury was the source of an honorable fortune was unacceptable to the armed forces and contributed to the coup. This peculiar sense of public trust at the top, accompanied with the reportedly widespread Communist penetration of the Peronist-controlled universities, caused the military acute concern for the social health of the entire society. In short, by the end of 1975 and early 1976, the underlying causes of the coup were in place—the economy was approaching hyperinflation, the Peronist regime was politically paralyzed, terrorist sedition was escalating, and the social decay of the entire body politic was advancing. The only question in doubt was when the coup would occur.

TIMING OF THE COUP

When questioned about when there might be a coup, a senior military officer was quoted as saying "better a minute too late than a minute too soon." This quote sums up precisely the dilemma the military felt in ousting the Peronist entourage. The prevailing interpretation among many responsible Argentine analysts with regard to earlier coups against populist regimes was that they had come too soon. Indeed even after the March 1976 coup several observers criticised it as having been again premature. The basic reasoning behind this view for delaying to the last possible moment is that the populist ancien regime should be completely discredited by having to pay itself for the consequences of its policies. Too often, it was argued, the new authorities have had to bear responsibility for the necessary hardships through which the country must pass for its reconstruction. The populist regime squanders resources to court public approval and then is ousted because it cannot pay the bill. Unfortunately that ouster occurs before the people realize it was the populist regime and not its successor regime which caused the hardships through which the country inevitably must pass. All the past populist policies consequently are sanctified and opportunistic politicians may exploit again the gullible which makes the next experiment in electoral politics a repeat failure.

Why then did the coup come when it did and not later in the year? One factor was the growing unrest over the situation within the military. Between December 18-22, 1975, there was an Air Force revolt which was ended through negotiations. For many observers the Air Force uprising was similar to that of the Navy rebellion in June 1955 against Perón which also failed but indicated that Perón's fall was not far off. Another factor was the growing opposition of the groups to the regime whose support the military needed to put the economy back together again. In February, 1976, there was a 24 hour strike of an important organization of business groups (APEGE). The businesses were protesting the government's policies which were forcing them to sell goods already made at a loss. They were arguing that this would give a short term benefit to consumers but subsequently there would be a serious problem of putting the productive mechanism back into operation. The military was sensitive to the fact that if they waited it would make the recovery far more difficult and much longer. If there was no immediate takeover, it would be too late to make a reasonably prompt recovery. Since the military needed the support of key

productive sectors—the self-employed, the farmers, the private transport industry, the distributors, wholesalers and the like—the argument for an immediate coup was compelling.

Other factors were the growing belief that, if action was not taken soon, there was a chance the situation could drift into a full scale civil war with the military seemingly fighting for a discredited and corrupt regime. In addition, in the first months of 1976, the Peronist regime was using the rhetoric of the economic measures the military proposed to use without actually practicing them. Hence there was a fear these measures might be discredited unnecessarily.

A little noted event also aggravated the military view of the harm the Peronist regime was doing to the country. One of the main reasons the military permitted Perón's return in 1973 had been their hope he would reunite the country so that it would develop and thereby head off Brazilian predominance in the southern cone. That hope of unity and growth had been dashed and its international significance was brought home when the United States held discussions only with Brazil following the Russo-Cuban incursion into Angola on the effect the Soviet presence there would have on the South Atlantic. Numerous reports of the coup's imminence and objectives appeared in early March. Finally all the rumors and arguments were laid to rest with the coup d'etat of March 24, 1976.

THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT

As a result of the Peronist debacle the new military regime has comprehensive goals for Argentina. The principal priority is to revive the long ailing economy. The appointment of Jose Martínez de Hoz as Minister of the Economy makes the achievement of this objective likely. Government proposals are to prevent state enterprises from operating at a loss, to streamline and prune the bureaucracy to make it both more efficient and less costly, to eliminate government subsidies to provincial governments, to keep public works from contributing to inflation by requiring them to finance themselves from abroad if at all possible, to raise taxes and cut spending so that a far higher proportion of the budget than formerly would be covered by tax revenues and not by the printing presses, to turn nonstrategic state enterprises over to the private sector (although some industries are to remain mixed public and private), to put the currency exchange gradually on a free market basis, to encourage private business activity by reforming the tax system, and

to stimulate private and foreign capital investment. It was hoped that these policies would reverse the inflation induced regressive distribution of income which was impoverishing the middle class and would regenerate the economy into a period of prolonged and steady growth.

Martínez de Hoz proposed that this economic policy should be a gradualist one. Thus the government has a policy of reflation—that is inflation but at reduced levels—which is designed to spread the costs of the recovery by lowering everybody's real wages as an alternative to massive unemployment. This policy fits the government's view that the consumer orientation of the economy must be reduced while the producing sector, particularly for export, must be promoted.

The gradualist program for reform has been criticized. For some the gradualist approach to the nation's economic ills means postponing and thereby effectively dooming those measures which are necessary to put the country on the right economic course for the long run. They argue that the struggle against inflation is likely to be far more difficult than the economy team of Martínez de Hoz has foreseen, particularly under the conditions of lessening the social costs. In addition these critics are skeptical that the country has learned anything from its Peronist experience and believe gradualist policies and reflation will not sufficiently educate the people that the mitigated hardships through which they are now passing are the responsibility of the previous Peronist regime. They believe that the gradualist effort to transfer people from unproductive to productive jobs, the increase in the working day, the cutting of red tape and the like will be checked before reaching the desired objectives. Despite the criticisms the government appears to have no intention of accepting "the shock" method—which would probably create two million unemployed—but remains committed to gradualism, that of gradually reducing everybody's living standards in order not to have massive unemployment.

There have been some good results already. By September-October 1976 there were signs the balance of payments problem was being resolved. A positive trade balance for 1976 of some \$500 to \$600 million seemed nearly certain. The rate of inflation has been reduced; however, it continues to be a serious problem. Although certainly not at the hyper-inflation rate which existed at the time of the coup, the current inflation is still well above traditional rates. There is still a substantial treasury deficit. There have been some \$500 million in loans from the World Bank for electric power and other public work projects and the public debts have been met through International Monetary

and US and European bank loans. Argentina is seen as having survived the recession and that the recovery can be gradual as companies regain their capacity to form capital in a more stable financial environment.

With the foreign debt situation settled for the short run, the government is drafting new plans to stimulate mining and industrial development and to attract advanced technology and foreign investment. Nonetheless the struggle against inflation is likely to be far more difficult than was foreseen. This is true not only because the government is seeking to lessen social costs as it straightens out the economy, but also because the government cannot control the external economic situation where there is constant and sometimes severe inflation.

A CONSTITUTIONALIST REGIME

The military is interested in establishing a constitutionalist regime to replace the radical democratic doctrine of Peronism. The government announced that its objective was to construct a federal republican democracy to be inaugurated at some indefinite date in the future, in Videla's words "at the proper time." This is part of Videla's belief that the March coup has started a new "historic cycle." This assertion is one of the most problematical ones of the government. For the military to be successful, their rule must be followed by a government of responsible civilians backed by a majority of the people under the rule of law. The modern pattern has been after a period of military rule for there to be the rise of corrupt and demagogic leaders who have raided the public treasury and mismanaged the nation's economy and political affairs.

To do the required job the government will have to undertake some creative and constructive innovations as well as to push through some tough reforms. Experimental efforts at local self-government under strict constitutional and participatory guidelines will have to be inaugurated. Although the Peronist movement is in disarray, the Peronist power base, the centralized trade union organization, is still in place. This structure retains the potential for being a state within the state and must be placed on a voluntary, noncoercive and nonmonopolistic basis where wages are no longer fixed by government decree but are set through free bargaining in the context of the conditions of productivity and service within each industry. If the unions are not disestablished from the machinery of government, the

form of the Peronist regime may rise again to haunt the Argentine commonwealth. With disestablishment there is no need to suppress the union's social service structure or take other actions which would merely make the unions instruments of government policy. The best guess is that under the government's gradualist approach very few basic changes will be undertaken in the short run.

At the time of writing the government appears to have given less thought to these problems but in the long run attention to them is necessary to place Argentina on a long-term viable political course.

VIDELA AND SEDITION

An overriding concern of the government is to eliminate subversion. The security organizations appear to have had substantial successes. On July 20, 1976, Mario Santucho, the head of ERP, was killed. His career included a famous escape from an Argentine prison in August 1972, his Allende granted asylum, his strategy trip to Cuba, his return to Argentina and his death. The Santucho-headed ERP claimed "credit" for assassinating Abel R. Agarotti, the commander of the national police; Oberdán Sallustro, the Argentine head of Fiat; General Juan Carlos Sánchez and many others. It is believed that ERP has now lost its fighting capacity particularly in Tucumán but it still retains the ability to kidnap and assassinate.

The other main left wing terrorist organization, the Montoneros, is also believed to be on the defensive. In early October five top leaders of the Montoneros were killed but the principal leader, Mario Firmenich, is still at large. Undoubtedly the Montoneros have been wounded badly but they probably still have some fighting potential.

Unlike these Moscow-Havana dominated-or-infiltrated terrorist groups, the Maoist-oriented FAL (the Armed Liberation Forces) has popped out again. The FAL now operates under the label of the Red Brigades for Worker's Power (BRPO) and has killed the military interventor in the National Trade Union Organization.

At the same time that left wing terror has continued so has that from the right. Because of its cell organization and involvement of people from the country's security forces, the Videla government has not been able to completely control right wing terror either. Nonetheless Videla's stand on human rights is sound. He says "For us, respect for human rights is not only the result of the commands of the law, nor of international declarations, but the consequence of our

profound Christian convictions about the preeminent dignity of man as a basic value." The efforts to control terrorism have produced unacceptable abuses. Nonetheless, at the top of the Argentine government there is the understanding that a strict concern for human rights is compatible with the government's legitimate and thorough efforts to eradicate, within the law, terroristic subversion.

VIDELA AND SOCIAL RENEWAL

The first step the military government has taken regarding corruption is to set an example by having all officers who accept government posts keep their own military salaries and accept no additional prerequisites.

This example of puritanism in government was extended to not inviting any retired military personnel to assume high public office. In addition, the government seems committed to punishing those who violated their public trust strictly through the judicial system. Great care is taken to separate these prosecutions from political ideology.

Even more important in the long run to improving the moral climate will be the government's success in making the economy open and sound. The degree the economic chaos of the Peronist regime put more and more ordinary people outside the law or into dealings with criminal elements in order to obtain basic necessities was a recipe for degeneration.

Along with these efforts the government is making some progress with the universities. During the Peronist regime, university degrees were considered practically worthless and those who received them in that period have had trouble getting jobs. The government is now pushing through more vigorous entrance qualifications for the universities and is expanding opportunities in technical areas as against the more traditional emphasis on the law and humanities.

All these activities should help suppress subversion, since the majority of Argentina's young terrorists come from the universities and the middle class and not from the shanty towns and working class. Involving them in a rigorous education with the prospect of doing useful work helpful to the growth of the entire economy may encourage a progressive sense of work and a reverence for human life.

Development is necessary if Argentina wants to offset, in a balanced way, the growing penetration of Brazil in the River Plate Basin. Retired General Juan Carlos Guglielmelli has written on this subject frequently

and believes that Argentina faces the prospect of Brazilian hegemony unless it develops rapidly and strongly enough so that both nations can share influence in the southern cone and the south Atlantic.

The destruction of Argentine constitutional democracy came through the corruption of the democratic principle. When a country's constitutionalist principle has been corrupted, when its economy has been grossly mismanaged, when sedition is pervasive, and when the society is in an advanced stage of disorder, then a military regime is probably the only alternative capable of maintaining order and of reversing the decay. Such a military regime is not a tyranny if it is recognized as coming into existence after the demise of responsible government and as a result of the loss of civic understanding. Classic political thought recognized that the circumstances of bad government and a corrupted society justified Caesarism or the military regime. The Videla government is one of those regimes, as Eric Voegelin would say of "the post constitutional situation," and is the best possible present alternative as long as it serves the common good.

US FOREIGN POLICY

Nonetheless the United States has decided to cut off some \$15 million in military aid to Argentina for human rights violations. In addition, because of human rights criticisms of Brazil and the Carter administration's effort to undo the Brazilian-West German agreement on nuclear technology, US-Brazilian relations have deteriorated. The effort to control the potential spread of nuclear weapons may have just the opposite of the intended effect. Meanwhile Cuba is reported supporting Amin in Uganda, whose record on human rights leaves something to be desired, while the United States appears embarked on reopening negotiations with Castro, whose own record on human rights is far worse than Chile's ever was.

It is time for the United States to get back to basics. The principal US interest in world affairs is the security of the United States. The United States cannot do anything for human rights anywhere if it cannot gain, or if it loses, a favorable international distribution of power regionally as well as globally. For a free nation's foreign policy, the search for a favorable distribution of power is both a necessity and the highest norm. Deterioration in US-Argentinian and US-Brazilian relations and inattention to strains between Argentina and Brazil can only have the strategic significance of weakening the forces which

might resist Russo-Cuban takeover attempts in Latin America and Africa.

With the growing immobilization of US military forces and with the growing reach of Soviet client forces, we have moved from a loose bipolar system to a new system of international feudalism. This feudalistic system is characterized by a growing number of power-seeking and power-projecting states which serve their own interests by also developing a semivassalage-like relationship with a super power. The most aggressive, resentful, hypocritical and militant of these lesser states will find their prestige, status and power goals best served when they serve the Soviet Union. In this relationship the lesser state may further the systemic revolutionary purposes of its great patron while also serving its own ambitions by appearing in the guise (disguise) of a sort of international knight errant. The great irony of US human rights diplomacy is that it undermines the position of those who might help the United States check the spread of aggressive tyranny while providing excuses for Cuban aggression and further human rights violations. This extraordinary result is advanced through the double standard view of the human rights issue apparently advocated by *The New York Times*. For example, in an editorial on January 11, 1977, it was maintained that human rights violations in Tanzania were not cause for grave concern while those allegedly of Chile were. The justification for the double standard was the alleged discrepancy in concern of the two governments for human misery. This justification in fact turns out to be rhetorical and not objective concern since rarely are the arguments in favor of the double standard based on what has really been done for the general welfare because then one would be compelled to place Franco's Spain higher than Mao's China, and Pinochet's Chile higher than Allende's.

There is great mischief in the human rights guideline to foreign policy as presently employed. It is based on the belief that intention, particularly the intention of goodwill, provides the highest ethical standard. This is a trap. Would observers of human rights violations really abjure judgment because the intention of the violators was to raise the standard of living?

In international relations we must have an ethic of responsibility based on experience. Avoiding undesirable consequences are more important than good intentions which bring great danger. The present guidelines are alienating US friends, dividing allies and thereby opening up additional opportunities for Cuban knight errantry. This feudalistic

international system is supported by transnationalistic ideologies like communism, Third Worldism and others and if we wish to resist the spread of this feudal imperial system in Latin America and Africa we must have good relations with Argentina and Brazil and have good relations between Argentina and Brazil. They are strong enough to check Cuba, not a threat to the United States, and support a cooperative, pluralistic and interdependant international order.

ENDNOTES

1. Portions of this article have appeared in *Current History*, Vol. 72, No. 424, February 1977, pp. 57-60 and pp. 84-85.

2. Jeanne Kirkpatrick, *Leader and Vanguard in Mass Society: A Study of Peronist Argentina*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971. Professor Kirkpatrick makes the useful distinction between core Peronists and pro-Peronists.

3. For a more detailed discussion of the origins of Argentine terrorism see David C. Jordan, "Peron's Return, Allende's Fall and Communism in Latin America," *Orbis*, Vol. XVII, No. 3, Fall, 1973, pp. 1033-1037 and "Authoritarianism and Anarchy in Argentina," *Current History*, Vol. 68, No. 401, January 1975, pp. 3-4 and pp. 40-41.

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