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ACTION SS-25

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2, AND 4
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER SEES JACOBO TIMERMAN;
CONGRESSMAN GILMAN ALSO PERMITTED INTERVIEW WITH TIMERMAN

REF: BUENOS AIRES 6173; BUENOS AIRES 6137

1. SUMMARY. CONGRESSMAN GILMAN'S RECENT MEETING WITH TIMERMAN IS SUMMARIZED BELOW. THERE IS ALSO CONTAINED A SUMMARY OF AN ALLEGED CONFESSION MADE BY TIMERMAN DURING HIS CAPTIVITY. UNDER GROUND RULES ESTABLISHED BY THE GOA, MR. GILMAN AGREED NOT TO GIVE ANY PUBLICITY TO HIS MEETING. THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS MESSAGE WOULD PLACE TIMERMAN IN IMMEDIATE JEOPARDY AND COULD ALSO ADVERSELY AFFECT US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.
2. DURING THE VISIT OF CODEL YATRON TO BUENOS AIRES, AUGUST 17-20, REPRESENTATIVE BENJAMIN GILMAN ASKED FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS FOR PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW JACOBO TIMERMAN, THE PUBLISHER OF "LA OPINION" UNTIL HIS ARREST LAST APRIL IN CONNECTION WITH THE GRAIVER INVESTIGATION. UNTIL NOW THE ONLY INDIVIDUALS ALLOWED TO VISIT TIMERMAN HAVE BEEN CLOSE FAMILY MEMBERS AND HIS RABBI (WHO IS A UNITED STATES CITIZEN). WITHIN 24 HOURS OF

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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 _____

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MR. GILMAN'S REQUEST, THE FOREIGN MINISTER OBTAINED A GOVERNMENT DECISION TO PERMIT A CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEW WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE EVENING OF AUGUST 19 IN GOVERNMENT HOUSE. MR. GILMAN INTERVIEWED TIMERMAN IN THE PRESENCE OF A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL AND AN EMBOFF. AS A PRECONDITION FOR THE INTERVIEW, MR. GILMAN AGREED TO GROUND RULES LAID DOWN BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT HE WOULD NOT PUBLICIZE THE MEETING OR THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CONVERSATION. ON A CONFIDENTIAL BASIS, HOWEVER, THE CONGRESSMAN WAS AUTHORIZED TO INFORM "HIS COLLEAGUES," WHICH LATER WAS DEFINED TO INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE BELIEVED THAT PRESIDENT VIDELA WAS AWARE OF THE DECISION TO PERMIT THE INTERVIEW, BUT IT WAS BEING HELD CLOSELY WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT.

3. TIMERMAN WALKED UNHANDCUFFED AND ALONE INTO A ROOM WHERE HIS VISITORS WERE WAITING. HE CONVERSED WITH THE CONGRESSMAN IN ENGLISH. HE WAS DRESSED IN CASUAL STREET CLOTHES AND AN OLD SPORT JACKET WHICH APPEARED TO BE HIS OWN. HIS MANNER WAS SUBDUED, BUT HE APPEARED TO BE REMARKABLY IN CONTROL OF HIS MENTAL FACULTIES. IN FACT, HE DEMONSTRATED CONSIDERABLE ACUITY AND WIT AND HIS CONVERSATION WAS LACED WITH BITTERSWEET IRONY AT TIMES. EXCEPT FOR A DISCOLORED (BLACK) SKIN AREA UNDER ONE FINGERNAIL, THERE WAS NO OUTWARD SIGN OF BRUISES.

4. MR. GILMAN ASKED HOW HE WAS BEING TREATED AND HOW HE WAS FEELING. TIMERMAN REPLIED THAT A PRISONER IN HIS CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD NOT ANSWER THAT KIND OF A QUESTION, BUT HE WAS ALLRIGHT NOW -- WITH EMPHASIS ON THE "NOW". HE SAID HE HAD LOST WEIGHT, WHICH WAS A MIXED BLESSING. HE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY UNDERWEIGHT, BUT IT IS

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POSSIBLE THAT HE HAS BEEN GRAINING AGAIN IN RECENT WEEKS AS A RESULT OF IMPROVED TREATMENT.

5. TIMERMAN SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHY HE WAS BEING HELD, AS NO FORMAL CHARGES HAD BEEN LODGED AGAINST HIM. HE HAD NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO SEE THE MILITARY JUDGE'S INVESTIGATING REPORT, WHICH WAS SECRET. FROM THE NATURE OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED OF HIM, HOWEVER, THE MILITARY OFFICIAL'S HANDLING OF

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THE INVESTIGATION WAS NO SOURCE OF COMFORT FOR HIM. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL, ADMITTING THAT HE TOO HAD NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO SEE THE PRELIMINARY JUDICIAL REPORT, STATED THAT ACCORDING TO COMMON KNOWLEDGE MR. TIMERMAN WAS SUSPECTED OF "ECONOMIC SUBVERSION" IN CONNECTION WITH THE GRAIVER AFFAIR. THE OFFICIAL DOUBTED THAT TIMERMAN COULD BE GRANTED THE RIGHT OF OPTION OF SELF-EXILE ABROAD AS HIS CASE WAS NOW IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS. TIMERMAN SAID HIS INTERROGATORS NEVER ONCE ASKED HIM ABOUT GRAIVER. INSTEAD, THE BULK OF THE QUESTIONS HAD TO DO WITH A PRESUMED WORLD JEWISH CONSPIRACY AGAINST ARGENTINA. HE WAS TOLD THAT SOVIET PREMIER KOSYGIN WAS A JEW. HIS INTERROGATORS ASKED WHAT HE KNEW ABOUT

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SECRET MEETINGS BETWEEN ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BEGUIN AND THE MONTONEROS AND A SECRET PLAN OF "THE ELDERS OF ZION" (IN THE LAST CENTURY) TO TAKE OVER PATAGONIA ("PLAN ANDINA"). AT ONE TIMERMAN SAID HE ALMOST GIVE IN TO TEMPTATION TO PLAY ALONG WITH THE ANTISEMITIC PARANOIA OF HIS CAPTORS AND INVENT A STORY ABOUT SECRET MEETINGS OF THE "ELDERS OF ZION" IN ARGENTINA. HE ALSO MENTIONED THAT HE HAD ASKED HIS JAILER, A SIMPLE, MAN, WHICH WAS THE EAST WALL OF HIS TINY PRISON CELL SO THAT HE COULD SAY HIS DAILY PRAYERS, BUT THIS INFORMATION LUDICROUSLY WAS DENIED ON SECURITY GROUNDS.

6. TIMERMAN WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO EXPLAIN TO THE CONGRESSMAN THE GOVERNMENT'S NEED TO TAKE EXTRAORDINARY ACTION AGAINST

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TERRORIST SUBVERSION AND ASKED FOR THE CONGRESSMAN'S UNDER-
STANDING OF THE SUBVERSIVE THREAT FACING THE MILITARY
GOVERNMENT WHEN IT TOOK POWER. TIMERMAN SAID HE WAS A STRONG
SUPPORTER OF THE VIDELA ADMINISTRATION AND HOPED THAT THE
U.S. WOULD DO EVERYTHING IT COULD TO SUPPORT VIDELA. HE
COMPLAINED THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS AT TIMES NAIVELY HAD
APPROACHED THE ARGENTINE QUESTION AND RECALLED THAT HE HAD
OFFERED LATE LAST YEAR TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE FRASER
SUBCOMMITTEE ABOUT THE TERRORIST CONNECTIONS OF GUSTAVO ROCA
AND GARZON MACEDA, WHOSE TESTIMONY FRASER HAD TAKEN EARLIER.
SHAKING HIS HEAD SADLY, "LOOK WHAT HAPPENS TO A MAN WHO WAS
TRYING TO DEFEND THE GOVERNMENT," HE SAID.

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7. TIMERMAN WAS VERY GRATEFUL FOR MR. GILMAN'S EFFORT TO SEE
HIM AND ALSO FOR MS. DERIAN'S INTEREST IN HIS WELFARE. GILMAN
EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT JUSTICE WOULD BE DONE IN THE TIMERMAN
CASE, IMPRESSING UPON THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL THAT
TIMERMAN'S CAPTIVITY HAD EARNED ARGENTINA ENORMOUS NEGATIVE
PUBLICITY ABROAD. TIMERMAN WAS THEN ESCORTED WITHOUT HANDCUFFS
TO A JEEP WAITING OUTSIDE AND DRIVEN AWAY.

8. COMMENT: WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT TIMERMAN MAY HAVE BEEN
GIVEN SOME COACHING BEFORE THE MEETING, THIS IS NOT NECESSARILY
THE CASE. TIMERMAN DID NOT SAY ANYTHING WITH RESPECT TO
U.S. POLICY AND THE NEED TO SUPPORT THE MODERATE VIDELA FORCES
THAT HE HAD NOT SAID BEFORE PUBLICLY IN HIS OWN NEWSPAPER WHEN
HE WAS A FREE MAN. GOVERNMENT'S MOTIVE IN ARRANGING THE
INTERVIEW APPARENTLY WAS TO APPEAR TO BE RESPONSIVE TO A
PRESUMABLY FRIENDLY U.S. CONGRESSMAN WHO OPPOSED SANCTIONS
AGAINST ARGENTINA AND WHO PRESUMABLY WAS INFLUENTIAL IN
AMERICAN JEWISH CIRCLES. ARGENTINES HAVE INORDINATE IDEAS OF
INFLUENCE OF JEWISH THINKING ON U.S. DECISION-MAKING AND
PURPOSE PRESUMABLY WAS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT TIMERMAN WAS IN
REASONABLY GOOD HEALTH AND RECEIVING GOOD TREATMENT.
NEVERTHELESS, AUTHORITIES APPEARED NERVOUS ABOUT RISK THEY
MIGHT BE RUNNING WITH HARDLINE MILITARY AND SO AVOIDED
LENDING HUGE PROPAGANDA SHOWCASE QUALITY TO THE EVENT. WE
BELIEVE IT PREMATURE TO DRAW ANY CONCLUSIONS AS TO THE FINAL
OUTCOME OF THE TIMERMAN CASE FROM THIS EVENT. END COMMENT.

9. EMBASSY ALSO HAS BEEN CONFIDENTIALLY TRANSMITTED A SERIES
OF DOCUMENTS FROM NAVAL INTELLIGENCE SOURCES THAT WE ORIGINALLY

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WERE TOLD WOULD DEMONSTRATE THAT TIMERMAN HAD CONFESSED TO BEING A COMMUNIST AND SOVIET SPY. HOWEVER, THE DOCUMENTS WE HAVE INSTEAD INCLUDE COMMENTS PURPORTEDLY MADE BY THE POLICE

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CHIEF OF THE PROVINCE OF BUENOS AIRES, COL. CAMPS, IN A BRIEFING ON MAY 3, 1977. REPORTEDLY ACCORDING TO CAMPS, TIMERMAN DEFINED HIMSELF AS A MARXIST SINCE HIS YOUTH WHO HAD BEEN ACTIVE IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS. HE ADMITTED PATTERNING HIS NEWSPAPER ALONG THE MARXIST LINES OF "LE MONDE". (SIC) HE ALSO ADMITTED THAT DAVID GRAIVER HAD PROVIDED ALL THE CAPITAL FOR THE NEWSPAPER AND THE PRINTING PLANT AND TIMERMAN ORIGINALLY HAD BEEN ACCORDED A 45 PERCENT INTEREST AS THE FRUITS OF HIS LABOR. ON THE DEATH OF GRAIVER, TIMERMAN ALLEGEDLY THREATENED GRAIVER'S WIDOW WITH DEATH UNLESS SHE TURNED OVER TO HIM HER LATE HUSBAND'S SHARES. HE ALLEGEDLY ADMITTED HAVING RECEIVED A \$200,000 BRIBE TO WRITE A FAVORABLE STORY ON THE ALUAR DEAL AND ANOTHER \$175,000 ON ANOTHER OCCASION BY ITT. ACCORDING TO COL. CAMPS' REPORTED STATEMENT. TIMERMAN ADMITTED ALL OF THESE THINGS IN A SIGNED CONFESSION. ANOTHER DOCUMENT INCLUDED IN THE PACKET CITES MEDIA ARTICLES AS REPORTING THAT TIMERMAN HAD BEEN A MEMBER OF A COMMUNIST YOUTH FRONT GROUP IN 1942, HAD ADMITTED BEING A "LEFTIST ZIONIST," HAD BEEN FRIEND OF FORMER PERONIST ECONOMY MINISTER JOSE BER GELBARD WHOSE POLICIES HE UNCONDITIONALLY SUPPORTED IN HIS NEWSPAPER, HAD PURSUED A CONFUSED EDITORIAL INE WHICH AT ONE TIME SUPPORTED TERRORIST SUBVERSION AND SUBSEQUENTLY ATTACKED IT AND WHO WAS A SELF-CONFESSED SUPPORTER OF EURO-COMMUNISM AS OPPOSED TO THE SOVIET LINE. THERE IS ALSO A HODGEPODGE OF OTHER CHARGES SUCH AS THAT HE HIRED WELL-KNOWN LEFTISTS AND ALLEGED TERRORIST SUPPORTERS ON HIS NEWSPAPER STAFF.

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