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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4044

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS OREP, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT CODEL REUSS: CONGRESSMAN CONTE SEES JACOBO TIMERMAN

REF: 77 BUENOS AIRES 6326

SUMMARY: DURING THE COURSE OF THE VISIT OF
CODEL REUSS TO BUENOS AIRES (LED BY REP.
WILLIAM S. MOORHEAD), REP SILVIO O CONTE
(R., MASS.) WAS GRANTED PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW
FORMER LA OPINION PUBLISHER JACOBO TIMERMAN IN
PRISON. MR CONTE ALSO MET WITH TIMERMANS WIFE
AND BROTHER IN THE TIMERMAN HOME. THE CONGRESSMAN
TOOK COPIOUS NOTES OF BOTH CONVERSATIONS. THE
TIMDRMANS PROVIDED AMPLE INFORMATION TO SUPPORT
THEIR VIEW THAT JACOBO WAS A VICTIM OF CONTINUING
PERSECUTION AND PREJUDICE. DESPITE THE FAILURE OF
A MILITARY TRIBUNAL TO FIND SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO
SUPPORT AN INDICTMENT, TIMERMAN REMAINS
INPRISON WITHOUT ANY CLEAR PROSPECT OF RELEASE. THE
TIMERMANS ARE BANKING ON CONTINUED PRESSURE FROM THE US AS
THEIR ONLY SOURCE OF HOPE. MR CONTE PLEDGED THEM HIS SUPPORT.
MESSAGE WAS NOT CLEARED WITH MR CONTE BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE.
END SUMMARY.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
() Release (X) Excise () Deny
Exemption(s): B-6
Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full
() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

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1. ACCOMPANIED BY AN EMBOFF, REP. CONTE HAD A ROUGHLY 40 MINUTE
MEETING WITH MR TIMERMAN JANUARY 6 IN AN ASSISTANT JAIL

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WARDENS OFFICE IN FEDERAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS IN BUENOS AIRES. MR TIMERMAN HAS BEEN HELD IN THE DETENTION QUARTERS (ALCAIDIA) OF FEDERAL POLICE HQ SINCE LAST SEPTEMBER WHEN HE WAS TRANSFERRED FROM THE MAGDALENA PRISON. (CURIOSLY, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS MISTAKENLY BELIEVED THAT TIMERMAN WAS STILL AT MAGDALENA AND BEGAN TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONGRESSMAN TO BE RECEIVED AT THE MAGDALENA PRISON UNTIL WE ASKED THEM TO CHECK AGAIN.) THE CONGRESSMAN WAS COURTEOUSLY RECEIVED AT POLICE HQ AND ALLOWED TO INTERVIEW THE PRISONER ALONE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE -- ALTHOUGH AT ONE POINT THE CHIEF WARDEN ENTERED THE ROOM TO GREET MR CONTE AND THEN PROCEEDED TO CARRY ON A SEPERATE CONVERSATION WITH POLICE OFFICIALS IN ONE CORNER WHILE THE CONGRESSMAN CONTINUED TALKING TO TIMERMAN. COKE REFRESHMENTS WERE SERVED. EMBOFF DOUBTS THAT THE CONVERSATION WAS TAPED.

2. TIMERMAN SAID HIS PHYSICAL CONDITION WAS OK AND HE NO LONGER WAS INDANGER OF BEING KILLED, BUT HE WAS DEPRESSED BY THE FACT THAT HE HAD BEEN HELD SINCE APRIL 1977 WITHOUT ANY GOOD REASON OR FORMAL CHARGES PRESSED AGAINST HIM AND HE STILL HAD NO FIRM IDEA IF AND WHEN HE WOULD BE SET FREE. HE WAS IN A CRAMPED CELL WHICH HAD NEITHER FRESH AIR NOR NATURAL LIGHT.

3. CONTE ASKED ABOUT TIMERMANS CONNECTIONS WITH THE GRAIVER INTERESTS. TIMERMAN RESPONDED THAT HE AND DAVID GRAIVER HAD BEEN PARTNERS IN 1970 (IN THE NEWSPAPER) -- SEVERAL YEARS BEFORE BRAIVER WAS ALLEGED TO HAVE ENTERED INTO A FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE MONTONEROS. AFTER EXTENSIVE POLICE INTERROGATION IN WHICH TORTURE WAS EMPLOYED AND JUDICIAL

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INVESTIGATION, ALL CHARGES WERE DROPPED. THEN THE GOVERNMENT PLACED HIM UNDER THE ACT OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, ACCORDING TO WHICH HE NOW MUST PROVE THAT HE ACQUIRED HIS PROPERTY LEGALLY. THE ONLY PROPERTY HE NOW OWNED WAS TWO APARTMENTS AND A CAR. TIMERMAN THOUGHT IT WOULD NORMALLY TAKE AN ACCOUNTANT A HALF DAY TO DETERMINE THE LEGALITY OF THESE ACQUISITIONS, BUT THIS DEVICE WAS INTENDED TO KEEP HIM IN JAIL INDEFINITELY. AS FOR LA OPINION, THE PAPER HAD BEEN TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM AND THERE WAS NO HOPE OF RECOVERING IT.

4. TIMERMAN IMPLIED THAT HE WAS BEING PERSECUTED FOR HIS VIEWS. HE WAS A DEMOCRAT WHO HAD OPPOSED THE "FASCISMS OF THE

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LEFT AND RIGHT." HE HAD INFURIATED HIS RIGHTWING INTERROGATORS WITH THIS PHRASE, IE DARING TO SULLY THE GOOD NAME OF FASCISM BY INSINUATING THAT COMMUNISTS WERE LEFT WING FASCISTS*
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5. HE DESCRIBED HIS TORTURE AT SOME LENGTH. THIS TOOK PLACE IN AN OLD, ABANDONED POLICE PRECINCT NEAR THE CITY OF LA PLATA WHEN HE WAS UNDER THE CUSTODY OF A MISED UNIT OF THE ARMY AND PROVINCIAL POLICE KNOWN AS "COTE" (PHONETIC). WETTED DOWN AND TIED TO A BED, AN ELECTRIC PROD WAS APPLIED TO HIS BODY. WHEN THE SESSIONS WERE OVER, HE FELT NEITHER PAIN NOR FATIGUE AND NO MARKS WERE LEFT, BUT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE THE SHATTERING EFFECT OF THE ELECTRIC SHOCKS THEMSELVES WHEN THEY WERE BEING APPLIED. A STEP DOWN DEVICE WAS USED TO REDUCE THE 220 VOLTS, LEST THE PRISONERS BE KILLED INSTANTLY. THERE WERE TWO PHYSICIANS IN ATTENDANCE TO CHECK THE HEARTS OF THE VICTIMS. ONCE, THROUGH A PEEPHOLE, TIMERMAN SAW PILES OF CORPSES. MEMBERS OF THE SAME FAMILY WERE TORTURED TOGETHER IN THE SAME ROOM. OBVIOUSLY IMPRESSED BY-TIMERMANS ACCOUNT, - CONTE INTERJECTED WITH ". . . THE SAVAGES" SEVERAL TIMES.

6. THERE WERE OTHER RECOLLECTIONS, SOME OF WHICH WE HAVE HEARD AND REPORTED BEFORE:

- A. HIS TORTURERS WANTED TO KNOW WHERE THE ELDERS OF THE PROTOCOLS OF ZION HELD THEIR SECRET MEETINGS IN ARGENTINA.
- B. IN THE OFFICE OF PROVINCIAL POLICE CHIEF, COLONEL (NOW GENERAL) CAMPS, THERE HUNG FROM THE WALL AN APOCRYPHAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE US GOVERNMENT. IT SHOWED A CHAIN OF COMMAND RUNNING FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO BRZEZINSKI (WITH "JEW" WRITTEN AFTER HIS NAME) TO SOL LINOWITZ (ALSO "JEW"). OFF TO THE SIDE THERE WERE TWO LINES LINKING UP WITH

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THE DIAGRAM MARKED "GELBARD" AND "GRAIVER". THE IMPLICATION,
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SAID TIMERMAN, WAS THAT CARTERS ADMINISTRATION WAS THE PRODUCT OF A COMMUNIST ARGENTINE JEWISH CONSPIRACY. C. IN ONE JAIL HE NOTED THAT A PRISONER HAD SCRATCHED OUT PART OF A SLOGAN WRITTEN ON A WALL SO THAT, INSTEAD OF "YANKEE GO HOME", IT NOW READ "YANKEE TAKE ME HOME". HE THOUGHT THIS REFLECTED A VERY SIGNIFICANT TRUTH. UNDER CARTERS HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY A TREMENDOUS TRANSFORMATION WAS TAKING PLACE IN LATING AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE US. CARTER, WITH HUMAN RIGHTS, HAD DISCOVERED THE ULTIMATE PHILOSOPHY WITH WHICH TO COMBAT TOTALITARIANISM OF THE EXTREME LEFT AND RIGHT.

7. TIMERMAN SAID THAT THE ONLY WAY THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT WOULD SET HIM FREE WAS VIA CONTINUED PRESSURE FROM THE US REP CONTE SAID THAT HE HAD PROPOSED TO ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER (AIR FORCE COMODORO) CURA THAT TIMERMAN BE RETURNED TO HIS HOME PENDING THE OUTCOME OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO HIS PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS. A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL, HOWEVER, HAD ALLEGED THAT THIS PROCEDURE WAS NOT AVAILABLE UNDER THE INSTITUTIONAL ACT. WHEN HE RETURNED TO THE US, CONTE SAID HE WOULD CONTINUE FIGHTING FOR TIMERMANS LIBERTY.

8. TIMERMAN SAID THAT IF HE WERE SET FREE, HE AND HIS FAMILY WOULD EMIGRATE TO ISRAEL. HE HAD ALREADY TOLD INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY THAT HE WOULD NOT SPEAK OUT AGAINST ARGENTINA FROM EXILE ABROAD. THE GOA HAD ALL THE GUARANTEES IT NEEDED: HIS BROTHER AND SON HECTOR PLANNED TO REMAIN IN ARGENTINA.

9. REP CONTE'S CONVERSATION WITH TIMERMANS WIFE AND BROTHER THE PREVIOUS DAY, WHILE MORE EXTENSIVE, COVERED MUCH THE SAME GROUND. MRS TIMERMAN CONFIRMED THAT HER HUSBAND WAS IN SATISFACTORY PHYSICAL CONDITION, BUT HIS MENTAL STATE WAS WORRISOME. RIGHTWING NATIONALIST CIRCLES IN AND ON THE FRINGES
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OF GOVERNMENT COULD NOT FORGIVE TIMERMAN BECAUSE HE WAS A DEMOCRAT AND PRO US -- AND A JEW TO BOOT. THESE ELEMENTS WERE PRO-AXIS DURING WORLD WAR II, THOUGHT FDR WAS A JEW AND

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"HAD CELEBRATED ROOSEVELTS DEATH WITH CHAMPAGNE". BUT THE GOA WAS SENSITIVE ABOUT ITS IMAGE ABROAD AND IT WAS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE ABOUT CHARGES OF ANTISEMITISM IN ARGENTINA. THE TIMERMANS WERE INDEBTED TO MS DERIAN, CONGRESSMAN BENJAMIN GILMAN (R. NY) AND NOW CONGRESSMAN CONTE AS WELL AS MANY OTHERS IN THE US FOR THE SUPPORT THEY HAD GIVEN. CONTINUED PRESSURE FROM THE US WAS THE TIMERMANS ONLY HOPE OF SECURING JACOBOS RELEASE.

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11. ASKED BY MR CONTE WHAT MORE HE COULD DO, MRS TIMERMAN SUGGESTED HE TRY TO GET OTHER CONGRESSMEN TO JOIN HIM ON HIS VISIT TO HER HUSBAND, SO THAT THE GOA WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT CONTE WAS NOT A PERSONAL INTEREST BUT RATHER A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE BROADLY FELT IN THE US CONGRESS. AS INDICATED, HOWEVER, CONTE WAS THE ONLY CODEL MEMBER TO VISIT TIMERMAN THE FOLLOWING DAY.

12. EVIDENTLY BASED ON FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES, THE LOCAL PRESS REPORTED THAT MR CONTE HAD REQUESTED AUTHORIZATION TO SE MR TIMERMAN AND THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD MADE THE APPROPRIATE ARRANGEMENTS. THIS TREATMENT DIFFERS FROM THE GROUND RULES OF SECRECY UNDER WHICH REP GILMAN WAS ALLOWED TO SEE TIMERMAN LAST AUGUST. NEVERTHELESS, JACOBO AND HIS WIFE ASKED MR CONTE TO PROTECT THE INFORMATION THEY PROVIDED HIM.

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IN HIS AIRPORT DEPARTURE REMARKS TO THE PRESS, CONGRESSMAN MOORHEAD DID NOT DISCLOSE THE SUBSTANCE OF MR CONTE'S CONVERSATION WITH TIMERMAN.
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