



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Buenos Aires, Argentina

EO 13526
3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs

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I have now been through what purport to be copies of interrogation reports of Jacobo TIMERMAN following his arrest April 15, 1979. These reports are dated April 15, 16, 17, 18, 26 and 30. There is also a report that is missing its first page, and thus cannot be dated. The reports consist of a combination of detailed summaries of the Q's and A's and direct, verbatim transcripts. In several, other people detained at the same time as TIMERMAN also appear and answer questions. All the transcripts are signed, by the police officers who are supposed to have been present during the interrogations as well as by TIMERMAN. The April 16 report states the interrogation was conducted at Campo de Mayo. The others state they took place in La Plata.

Though classified "SECRET" by the GOA, these transcripts were supplied to ICA by La Prensa. I believe that these are the transcripts that were leaked to La Prensa at the time of TIMERMAN's arrest. The paper published extracts of them at the time.

Reading these documents was no pleasure. TIMERMAN writes in his book that he was heavily tortured. Luis Enrique JARA, TIMERMAN's number two at La Opinion, was also arrested April 15 and appears in the transcripts

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giving testimony with TIMERMAN. JARA was later released. He told the Embassy that he was tortured with a cattle prod and he believed that TIMERMAN probably received similar treatment. He also said he heard the guards yelling "dirty Jew" at TIMERMAN. TIMERMAN himself is quoted in the April 26 transcripts as stating he was in "a very diminished mental and physical state." On the other hand, on April 28 TIMERMAN's son told the Embassy that the family understood from JARA and another man who was present during the cross-examination of TIMERMAN that TIMERMAN did not appear to have been tortured though he was in a bad mental state.

TIMERMAN, as he is told the first day of his detention, was arrested on the orders of the Army. He was formally detained by the Buenos Aires Provincial Police, however. The interrogator at at least one of these cross-examinations seems to be the B.A. Police Chief, then Col. Ramón CAMPS..

In preparing what follows, I have refrained from using the words "reportedly," "allegedly" and the like to keep from exhausting whoever might read this. Given the origins of the texts, the reader should assume that these caveats appear at what would be the appropriate places throughout my summary.

The transcripts give the following impressions:

(A) TIMERMAN was arrested, in part, because of the Army's interest in his connection with David GRAIVER. The first thing he is asked about on April 15 is his connection to GRAIVER. This theme continues throughout the transcripts. GRAIVER provided the money to get La Opinion started in 1971 and had 45% of the paper's stock until his death or disappearance August 7, 1976. TIMERMAN had 45% and Jorge RUTEMBERG, his life-long friend, had 10%. The GRAIVER tie takes up a great deal of the interrogations. The questions seemed to be aimed at finding out what influence GRAIVER had at La Opinion.

GRAIVER was a financial wheeler-dealer whose operations brought down many people in Argentina, as well as two banks in the United States. The GRAIVER scandal began to take on larger and larger dimensions following his death/disappearance in Mexico in August 1976. One aspect of the GRAIVER scandal was his alleged role in laundering money for the Montoneros that the latter derived from their robberies, kidnapping and blackmail

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operations. The Embassy (State, FBI, [] at the time 3.3(b)(1)
 seemed to believe that this charge against GRAIVER was,
 at best, "not proven" and probably without foundation.
 However, it was at the time widely rumored. Far more
 certain were the fraudulent and corrupt practices that
 GRAIVER engaged in to build his financial network.

GRAIVER's money got La Opinion started. He and
 TIMERMAN had worked together in other operations. He
 was also suspected, at least, of being a man who laun-
 dered Montonero money. Finally, the Montoneros had
 at one time a very significant presence on the paper.
 Thus, the interest of the interrogators in learning more
 about GRAIVER's connection with La Opinion and its
 publisher does not seem terribly unnatural.

In fact, at one point TIMERMAN states that after the
 GRAIVER scandal began to break, many people advised him,
 TIMERMAN, to leave the country because he was sure to
 be arrested. TIMERMAN says he did not follow the advice
 because he wanted to make clear that he, not GRAIVER,
 ran the paper. Throughout the interrogation TIMERMAN
 maintains, plausibly to me, that GRAIVER had no influence
 on La Opinion's editorial policy. I wonder though what
 GRAIVER got out of the paper for his money.

(B) TIMERMAN never told anybody at the paper about
 GRAIVER's La Opinion connection, however. The unfor-
 tunate JARA finds out about this during the cross-
 examination of TIMERMAN, as does another La Opinion
 editor, Ramiro de CASASBELLAS, who was also detained
 with TIMERMAN. In fact, both say that TIMERMAN speci-
 fically denied this connection to them when they asked
 him about it before.

(C) TIMERMAN's arrest may also have been connected
 with La Opinion's publication of reports about habeas
 corpus petitions filed on behalf of disappeared persons.
 (Bob COX of the Herald was also detained at about the
 same time, for this reason and at the behest of Army
 hardliners.) At one point TIMERMAN's interrogator
 asks him if he wasn't told to stop printing news about
 habeas corpus petitions. TIMERMAN answers that
 Interior Minister Harguindeguy had warned him, and he
 had cut way back after this conversation. However, he
 said, he thought Harguindeguy gave him the go-ahead to
 publish a story on disappearances every once in a while.

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(D) TIMERMAN's jewishness and his zionism are subjects of some interest to his interrogators. They do not come across in these documents as central to the purpose of the questioning. Perhaps at one point when TIMERMAN tells them he is a "leftist" and a "zionist" that is all the confirmation they need for their assumption about the connection between the two. To the man or the men asking the question, leftist is the same as marxist, as he (they) makes clear to TIMERMAN at another point. TIMERMAN resists this identification -- but the questioner insists that La Opinion and TIMERMAN are "leftist, zionist, pro-marxist." JARA, who is present at the interrogation when TIMERMAN states that his ideology and the ideology of Opinion are leftist-zionist, expresses surprise, stating that when TIMERMAN hired him he, TIMERMAN, stated that the paper was "democratic and pluralist." TIMERMAN states at several points that he founded Opinion with the purpose of following the model of Le Monde. But he also says that he intended to give the paper a leftist-zionist orientation to fill an important gap in the market place. Intellectuals and young people, he states, were the particular target audiences of the paper. As noted above, JARA told the Embassy after he was freed that he heard the guards yelling anti-semitic abuse at TIMERMAN. JARA also felt that some of the questioning of TIMERMAN reflected anti-semitic attitudes. (I would agree. And CAMPS is notorious as an anti-semite.)

(E) Montoneros and leftists were among the first staffers hired by TIMERMAN. He makes the point, several times, that material representing the viewpoint of this sector did not dominate the paper's coverage. However, he recognizes that the paper did publish some articles which aided and abetted the Montonero cause. In 1973 he brought in JARA with the expressed purpose of getting rid of the Montoneros -- a task that was apparently accomplished over the next two years. TIMERMAN also makes the point that the Montoneros dominated La Opinion's union and through that domination caused him a great deal of trouble until he (he claims he was the first publisher to do so) broke the union's control over the paper's employees.

(F) There is much interest in former President LANUSSE and his connections with GRAIVER. GRAIVER comes across as a man who spread contamination far and wide. A portion of the interrogation centers on

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TIMERMAN's relationship to Edgardo SAJON. SAJON was LANUSSE's press secretary, a close associate of GRAIVER and manager of the printing operation at Opinion. He disappeared in April 1977 shortly before TIMERMAN was detained. He probably died soon after. The transcripts also reveal that LANUSSE's son and daughter both worked in GRAIVER's private office, which I have learned was well known at the time.

(G) TIMERMAN, like GRAIVER, also had close connections with Jose GELBARD, Finance Minister in the last Peron government and a wheeler-dealer of major proportions. GELBARD and GRAIVER were involved in the establishment of such major investments as Papel Prensa and Aluar, operations that always had a touch of scandal about them. GELBARD's business and/or political ties ran to people like Frondizi, the Frigerios and Martinez de Hoz's family. TIMERMAN admits in the tapes to taking \$100,000 consultant's fee from GELBARD and having the money deposited in his Swiss account. According to JARA and CASASBELLAS, TIMERMAN gave strict marching orders that La Opinion was to support GELBARD's policies while Finance Minister and also the establishment of the Aluar plant. It takes no imagination to believe that the consultant fee helped purchase the good coverage. (In fact, JARA later told the Embassy that this is precisely what happened.)

(H) TIMERMAN comes across as a man of checkered credentials. He states that he founded the magazine Confirmado in 1964(?) at the request of Army General VILLEGAS. The purpose of Confirmado was to support Ongania and undermine the elected democratic government of President Illia, he says. He makes this point on two separate occasions. He also states that he accepted \$200,000 from the German firm Siemen's when the latter was competing with ITT. The money was paid to his Swiss account.

(I) After GRAIVER's death or disappearance, TIMERMAN maneuvered to get his share of the paper away from his survivors -- principally his wife. This story comes out in the interrogation in which GRAIVER's widow -- also a detainee -- appears. According to the widow, who also appears in the transcripts, TIMERMAN first told her that hanging on to the shares placed her life in jeopardy. When that didn't work, TIMERMAN played another card, technically legal but in spirit, perhaps, fraudulent. He published an advertisement in a local

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paper announcing a stockholders meeting. The ad followed the letter of Argentine law but was so obscurely placed that the GRAIVERS never saw it. TIMERMAN and RUTEMBERG met and voted a new stock split, so that the GRAIVER family wound up with 2%, TIMERMAN with 68% and RUTEMBERG with 38%. (Actually, there were two firms -- one owned the paper and the other owned its printing plant. The stock shuffling was more complicated than described here. But the picture, if simplified, is accurate.) TIMERMAN maintains that GRAIVER never put more money in the paper after 1971, thus justifying the split. GRAIVER's widow says that on the contrary, her husband put in substantial money and she has the documents to prove it.

COMMENT. I have attached five Embassy cables from April/May 1977 that give indispensable background on the whole TIMERMAN affair. They should be read. Notable are JARA's statement to the Embassy which corroborate what he and TIMERMAN are reported in the transcripts to have said.

My own conclusions after plowing through the transcripts and the cables are:

(1) TIMERMAN was no subversive. He opposed terrorism. Nor was he the tool of the Montoneros. He was an opportunist who propitiated this sector when many Argentines were doing the same. And he challenged them in 1973, before many others were willing to do so; this was JARA's assignment.

(2) TIMERMAN was not arrested because he was a Jew or because he was publishing news about disappearances. He was arrested because of his connections with GRAIVER. Once in jail, he was subject to anti-semitic abuse, of some sort, and probably was tortured.

(3) TIMERMAN's arrest, finally, was connected to something much larger; an attempt by the "hardliners" in the Army in an effort to destroy the moderates, including then President VIDELA. The GRAIVER scandal was to be the weapon in the hardliners' assault. The authors and executors of this war plan were then First Army Commander SUAREZ MASON and Buenos Aires Governor SAINT JEAN. The vile Col. CAMPS was the main executor, at least as far as TIMERMAN was concerned. VIDELA was finally able to block these efforts. VIOLA, who was then Army Chief of Staff, was certainly an important ally. Interestingly, VIDELA took the GRAIVER investigation away from CAMPS and the hardliners, entrusting it

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to the Army G-4 who was Gen. GALLINO, now Governor of Buenos Aires Province.

The whole saga painted in these transcripts and cables goes far beyond TIMERMAN. It is the story of political, economic and moral debasement of Argentina's political, economic and labor leaders, and, it must be concluded, important elements of Argentina's upper and middle classes. They all play in the same park, and by the same rules or lack of rules. Torture and corruption -- violence and degradation -- seem finally to be at the heart of Argentine political life. The military, the terrorists, the politicians, the industrial leaders and the journalists are all aware of this condition and accept it. The exceptions to this blanket indictment are many -- but they have not written the sad tale known as Argentine history. The TIMERMAN story; the GRAIVER story; the LANUSSE story; the SUAREZ MASON story; the MASSERA story; the PERON story; are not exceptions. They are illustrations. Together they make it virtually impossible to be anything but pessimistic about this country's future.

The conversion of TIMERMAN into a human rights hero does nothing to loosen the grip of such pessimism. To the contrary. Major human rights violations took place here. The nation turned its back on the fundamental achievement of Western civilization -- the rule of law. And that message need to be understood, especially in Argentina. But there could not be a more unfortunate messenger than TIMERMAN. Human rights issues inevitably become mixed up with him -- and his shady, disreputable reputation. The people who most need to be made to listen to the message -- that civilized nations do not behave the way Argentina did -- turn off when TIMERMAN speaks. More importantly, they conclude that if TIMERMAN is considered a human rights hero, then the human rights issues, like TIMERMAN, are phony political issues. However unjust such a conclusion, the fact is that rather than serving human rights in Argentina, TIMERMAN's identification with the issue has damaged them.

Attachments:

1. 77 Buenos Aires 2820
2. 77 Buenos Aires 3052
3. 77 Buenos Aires 3133
4. 77 Buenos Aires 3260
5. 77 Buenos Aires 3293

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