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From Condemnation to Conformity: Carter and Reagan's Foreign Policy towards the Argentine
Junta, 1977-1982

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of History
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Masters of Arts in History

by
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December 2005

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Dr. Henry Antkiewicz
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Keywords: Argentina, dirty war, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, foreign relations

ABSTRACT

From Condemnation to Conformity: Carter and Reagan's Foreign Policy towards the Argentine

Junta, 1977-1982

by

William Houston Gilbert

This study examines how the administrations of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan responded to the widespread human rights abuses committed by the Argentine military during the country's Dirty War between 1977 and 1982. The objective is to gain a broader understanding of the policies pursued by both administrations. Under Carter, who brought human rights to the forefront of American foreign policy, Argentina was heavily targeted and sanctioned with the anticipation that such measures would enhance the human rights status in Argentina. Ultimately, such policies resulted in open hostility in bilateral relations, culminating in Argentina's refusal to support Carter's proposed grain embargo on the Soviet Union in 1980. Reagan moved to restore relations until Argentina's invasion of the Falklands in April, 1982. The works of many authors were consulted in conjunction with newspapers, journal articles, government proceedings, and declassified documents obtained from the National Security Archives.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated in memory of all those who disappeared during the Dirty War and for my best friend and inspiration in life, Joanie Thomas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work presented innumerable challenges, requiring a number of long nights and a lot of hard work from myself and many other individuals. Without them, none of this would have been possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank the director of my thesis, Dr. Melvin Page, for his patience and diligence throughout this entire process. Certainly none of this would have been possible without his help and advice. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the other members of my committee, Dr. Henry Antkiewicz and Dr. Kenneth Mijeski. Likewise, thanks to Carlos Osorio and all the fine staff at the National Security Archives for their work in the Argentina Declassification Project and assisting me with declassified material. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my family, friends, and others who have tolerated me during the past few months.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the 1970s, Argentina was plagued by widespread terrorism from both the far right and the extreme left. Yet, with the coming to power in 1976 of the first of three successive military juntas, the ruling armed forces responded to the violence by unleashing their own form of state-sponsored terrorism that overwhelmed the forces they were combating. While exact statistics on victims are not known, roughly 15,000 to 20,000 Argentine citizens were illegally abducted from the streets, from their place of work, or from their homes, taken to one of the more than 300 clandestine prisons established throughout the country and subjected to horrendous torture. Many of these individuals were eventually murdered. Known by many as Argentina's Dirty War, the period of military rule from 1976 to 1982 represented the most brutal era in the country's history.

As with most major events in Latin America during the Cold War, the United States government has been widely condemned for its role during the Dirty War period. Much of this criticism has centered on the School of the Americas, or the SOA. Founded in 1946 and located in the Panama Canal Zone until it was relocated to Fort Benning Georgia in 1984, the SOA specialized in counterinsurgency, training over 57,000 Latin American military personnel including Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, Salvadorian death-squad leader Roberto D'Aubuisson, and Panamanian drug lord Manuel Noriega. While there, these officers were trained in irregular warfare, counterinsurgency, and the methods and theory of torture.¹

¹ A number of works on the SOA are widely available. Among the best and most objective are Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *School of Assassins: Guns, Greed, and Globalization* (New York: Obis Books, 2003) and Lesley

By 1976, over 600 Argentine officers had graduated from the school and nearly 4,000 military personnel had received formal training from the U.S. military. Roberto Viola and Leopoldo Galtieri, two of the three junta presidents during the dirty war, along with Urruty Formiguni, head of a notorious torture center, are only a few of the notorious graduates of the SOA. In September 1996, the Pentagon at last admitted that its students were taught torture, murder, sabotage, bribery, blackmail, and extortion for the achievement of political aims; that hypnosis and truth serum were recommended for use in the interrogations; and that the parents of captives be arrested as an inducement for prisoners to talk. All of these methods were widely incorporated and used during the dirty war period.²

Yet, such critiques of the SOA, although constructive, serve to obscure two important elements. First, the national security doctrine applied by the Argentine military during the era of the dirty war was not simply an example of a “Yankee export.” Rather, it was molded by the Argentine military’s own philosophy of counterinsurgency and training from a number of foreign countries. These included the large number of former Nazis who fled Germany following the fall of the Third Reich, who trained Argentine personnel in the 1950s and 60s, and the French, whose anti-subversive techniques in Algeria and Indochina were widely studied and adopted by the armed forces in Argentina. The latter proved to be far more influential. In fact, a permanent unit of French military advisors was present in Argentina throughout the dirty war period. This

Gill, *The School of the Americas: Military Training, and Political Violence in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

² Former U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry told reporters during a meeting of Western Hemisphere defense ministers that the U.S. would never again train Latin American military personnel in the application of torture. His comments were carried in the *Boston Globe*, 9 October 1996, p. A5; See also Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9-11; Frederick H. Gareau, *State Terrorism and the United States: From Counterinsurgency to the War on Terrorism* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, Inc., 2004), 93-108.

is not to suggest that such assessments of the U.S. role in the development of Argentina's counterinsurgency doctrine are unmerited or unjust. Obscuring and overlooking the influence of other external factors, as do many of those writing about the dirty war, undermines the objectivity of such research.³

Most importantly, the emphasis on the role of the SOA fails to answer essential questions concerning the primary role the U.S. played in the dirty war. How did the U.S. government respond to the apparent widespread human rights abuses? What types of measures or sanctions were used as incentives to enhance the human rights situation in Argentina? How did the junta respond to these actions? Most importantly, how successful was the U.S. in curtailing the atrocities? These are just a few of the questions this work attempts to answer.

Because relatively few people are informed about the dirty war, the second chapter, "Anatomy of a Dirty War," presents a general overview of the Argentine crisis and places the dirty war within its historical context. Between 1976 and 1982, Argentine society was the victim of an indiscriminate war waged by the military against guerrilla forces. The Dirty War resulted in the abduction, torture, and murder of thousands of innocent civilians who had no connection to the rebel forces the military was attempting to eradicate. This is the situation the administrations of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan confronted.

The third chapter, "Argentina as a Pariah," details the policies Carter adopted to improve the status of human rights in Argentina between 1977 and 1980. The Carter administration adopted a strictly revisionist foreign policy that, for the first time, propelled human rights to the

³ The influence of the French on Argentina's dirty war came to light in 2001 following an investigation by the French government into the role of special forces in the Algerian War. For excerpts from the report, see Cesar Chelala, "The French Connection in the Export of Torture," *The International Herald Tribune*, 22 June 2001, p. 9; Susan Bell, "French Taught Argentines How to Torture," *The Scotsman*, 15 June 2001, p. 12.

forefront of American foreign policy. Perhaps nowhere else was this policy challenged so strongly as in Argentina. The result was a marked deterioration of bilateral relations

The fourth chapter, “The 1980 Grain Embargo Negotiations,” details the grain embargo of 1980, which represents the primary argument in this work. The grain embargo, launched by Carter in response to the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan, did not have the intended result of severely punishing the Soviets primarily because Argentina refused to participate. While Argentina most likely would not have joined the embargo in any case due to economic necessity, it is doubtful that it would have cut exports to all traditional trade partners in order to replace as much of the lost grain the Soviets needed had not the Carter administration, from the Argentine junta’s viewpoint, openly provoked and alienated their country.

The fifth chapter, “Revision, Realism, and Reagan,” addresses how the policies pursued by the new administration of Ronald Reagan continued the policies pursued by Jimmy Carter during his final year in office. Reagan brought a strictly counter-revisionist foreign policy, similar to that pursued by the U. S. in the 1950s, which was nearly devoid of human rights considerations. Reagan also moved quickly to improve bilateral relations with the Argentine junta until their invasion of the Falklands. Ironically, starting from opposing points and operating under differing ideologies, both administrations ended with roughly the same foreign policy, imposing heavy sanctions on the Argentine junta.

This work does not represent an attempt to either condemn or condone either administration. Rather, the objective is to outline a wider basis from which to better understand the policies pursued by Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan towards Argentina and, perhaps, to establish a broader understanding of the foreign policies of both administrations. Likewise, a

conscientious decision was made to allow the participants to speak for themselves; much of what has been written or said by those individuals involved has been included where appropriate.

CHAPTER 2

ANATOMY OF A DIRTY WAR

On 9 December 1985, Jorge Rafael Videla, the former president of Argentina and commander in chief of the Argentine army, stood before the Federal Court of Criminal Appeals in Buenos Aires. Alongside him stood eight other generals and admirals who comprised the three successive military juntas who had ruled the country from March 1976 to December 1983. Collectively, the nine military members had been charged with the kidnapping, torture, and murder of thousands of their fellow citizens. In all, 709 victims of the dirty war, some of whom managed to survive, were chosen by prosecutor Julio Cesar Strassera to illustrate the brutality and barbarism the military had unleashed upon Argentine citizens from 1976 to 1983. From its beginning in April 1985, the trial was effectively the only story in the country, as Argentine citizens were forced to remember the sheer terror that had encompassed their country during the infamous dirty war.⁴

Internally, reactions to the verdicts and the trial were mixed, revealing a country that was both deeply divided and haunted by its past. Internationally, many observers still wondered how Argentina, a country that had long been the most literate and culturally advanced country in Latin America, could have become a land of sheer and open terror. Following World War II, Argentina ranked as the eighth wealthiest country in the world.⁵ Its overwhelmingly European

⁴Despite their convictions in 1985, all military personnel, including the nine generals and admirals that comprised the junta, and guerrillas were officially pardoned under the Due Obedience Law passed by president Carlos Menem in 1989 following a series of military revolts, collectively known as the *carapintada* revolts. For an in-depth analysis of the trial, see Amnesty International, *The Military Juntas and Human Rights* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1979).

⁵ Feitlowitz, *Lexicon of Terror*, 4.

population consistently produced the best scientists in Latin America, and it had established itself as one of the most refined and sophisticated cultures in the world, whose accomplishments often rivaled their European and American counterparts. How could a country so well endowed become a land of open violence whose barbarity in the dirty war was unrivaled in Latin America, even when compared to Pinochet's Chile?

The exact answer to this question continues to perplex Argentine society and the international community as a whole. The war itself not only represented the most brutal period in Argentine history but was the culmination of a half century of ideological warfare that had played itself out through successive military coups dating back to 1930 when General Jose Felix Uriburu overthrew the democratically elected government of Hipolito Yrigoyen. From the time of Uriburu's coup until Videla assumed power in 1976, 19 different presidents and 21 different administrations had occupied the Casa Rosada, seat of Argentina's government. Nine civilian-backed military coups occurred within the same timeframe. Only eight of the 21 administrations actually originated out of an election, with two of those elections being clearly manipulated and yet another two presidents being appointed by the army. The average duration of these administrations was little more than two years with one government in 1943 lasting a mere two days. Only two of the 21 administrations managed to complete their six year presidential terms. Between Uriburu's coup in 1930 and the advent of the dirty war in 1976, civilian governments were actually in power for 15 years, often only symbolically.⁶

Of the nine coups that occurred between 1930 and 1976, the ousting of General Juan Domingo Peron in 1955 proved to have the most lingering effect and is essential to an

⁶ The phenomenon of consecutive military coups in Argentina has been examined in numerous articles and works. For an exceptionally well written and concise examination, see Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: The "Dirty War" in Argentina* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 3-5.

understanding of the development of the dirty war as a whole. Peron, the dominant political figure in twentieth century Argentine politics, was elected president on 24 February 1946, claiming fifty-five percent of the popular vote in one of the cleanest elections in Argentina history. The politics he used, collectively known as Peronism, were largely based on Mussolini-style fascism Peron had witnessed firsthand as a military attaché in Italy. Yet what separated Peron from both his predecessors and heirs was his inclusion of organized labor into the political spectrum. During his tenure, he worked vigorously to enact laws prohibiting child labor, establish an eight hour work day and a national minimum wage, and provide accident insurance and a social security program for virtually all workers. Likewise, by establishing a base in organized labor, he had not only broken the traditional alliance between the military and the upper class, but he had also altered the balance of power in Argentine politics forever.⁷

While the military succeeded in ousting Peron in September 1955, his departure from the political arena propelled the country into a new era of political instability. As Guillermo O'Donnell deemed it, post-1955 Argentina became an “impossible game” whereby anti-Peronists on the one hand sought to eliminate the Peronist Party or ban Peronist candidates, while Peronist supporters, who constituted a majority of the electorate, made stable governing virtually unfeasible. Peron’s supporters recalled fondly how members of the working class had managed to acquire cabinet posts as well as several seats in Congress. Likewise, women had been given the right to vote for the first time in the country's history while the lower class had received subsidized medicines, free food and clothing, and numerous amenities. Above all,

⁷ A number of excellent biographies of Peron, also treating his policies are available. For the purpose of this thesis, the author consulted David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), chapters 6 and 7; Joseph Page, *Peron: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1983), *passim*; Eduardo Crawley, *A House Divided: Argentina 1880-1980* (London: Hurst Publishing, 1984), *passim*.

Peron had given a sense of dignity to the working class, the most cherished of all commodities bestowed. Thus, all governments after 1955 fluctuated between failed attempts at co-opting Peronism back into the political arena and eradicating Peronism as a whole. The primary obstacle was that no other party offered any viable alternative to Peronism, resulting in numerous parties being formed to a point that, by the 1965 congressional elections, there were 225 parties vying for office.⁸

At the same time, Argentina witnessed a surge of guerrilla movements in the absence of Peron. Although there were failed rural guerrilla uprisings in 1959, 1963, and 1964 attempting to emulate the Cuban Revolution, the year 1969 brought about a shift from rural to urban guerrilla warfare. In all, six armed guerrilla groups emerged in 1969. By the mid-1970s the People's Revolutionary Army, a Marxist group known by many as the ERP, and the Peronist Montoneros represented the only remaining guerrilla groups still active, all other factions having been eliminated or merged with the two. Within the span of a few years guerrillas represented a greater threat to the country's stability than the volatile political landscape from which they originally emerged. In 1969, insurgents carried out a total of 114 armed operations. By 1971 the number had risen to 654.⁹

Faced with the increasing activity of guerrilla groups and economic instability, the military once again sought a compromise with the Peronists in 1973 calling for free and fair elections. While Peron was not permitted by decree to run for the presidency, the Peronist party was allowed on the ballot. In May 1973 Dr. Hector Campora became president, paving the way

⁸ Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), chapter 3; Maria Jose Moyano, *Argentina's Lost Patrol: Armed Struggle, 1969-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 15.

⁹ Moyano, *Argentina's Lost Patrol*, 27.

for Peron's return. After declaring general amnesty and revoking numerous laws enacted by the military, Campora resigned, having served forty-nine days in office. Elections were once again held in September 1973 with Juan Peron claiming sixty percent of the popular vote.¹⁰

Peron represented the last individual with enough authority to hold the country together. It had been seventeen years since Peron had last served as president of the country. A whole generation had grown with the myth of Peron and Argentina's "golden era." Yet, before being in office for six months, Peron died, leaving his successor and wife, Maria Estela Martinez de Peron, or "Isabel," to run the country as the first female president in Latin American history.¹¹

Isabel inherited widespread problems. Not only did she lack the credibility of her husband, the former actress lacked the political intuitiveness, charisma, and imagination of her predecessor. Beyond this, Isabel faced a serious economic crisis that once again brought forth a resurgence in guerrilla forces who felt she neither understood nor represented the Peronist cause. Although Isabel replaced her administration's economic minister a total of six times in eighteen months, inflation reached 335 percent in 1975 alone and was running at an annual rate of 800 percent by 1976. The public sector incurred a massive debt while the international debt reached eight billion dollars. The International Monetary Fund openly refused to extend the country any further credit. Prices for goods and commodities rose at a rate of twenty percent a month.¹²

Within the eighteen month period following Peron's death, fifteen hundred assassinations occurred, equaling one death every eight hours. Likewise, guerrilla groups, coupled with the

¹⁰ Association of the Bar of the City of New York, *Report of the Mission of Lawyers to Argentina, April 1-7, 1979* (New York: Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, 1979), 4-5; Amnesty International, *Report of an Amnesty International Mission to Argentina, 6-15 November 1976* (London: AI Publishing, 1976), 7.

¹¹ Frederick H. Gareau, *State Terrorism and the United States: From Counterinsurgency to the War on Terrorism* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, Inc., 2004), 93.

¹² Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals*, 125.

Triple A (Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance), a right-wing death-squad operating from the Ministry of Social Welfare, accounted for an estimated bombing attack every three hours. With the economy in shambles and a full blown civil war in progress, every sector of Argentine society began pressing the military to once again step in. Considering the past fifty years of instability, the intrusion of the Argentine military into the political realm had come to be viewed as customary rather than unusual.¹³

On 23 March 1976, Isabel was placed under house arrest and later flown to a remote mansion in the southern foothills of the Andes. Shortly after 3:00 A.M. on March 24, 1976 the military junta, comprised of the three heads of the armed services, informed the nation that it had a new government.¹⁴

The military junta brought with it a clear sense of purpose and a comprehensive philosophy of repression. They titled their system as the Process of National Reorganization, a ponderous but obscurely menacing label. The goals of the junta were to uphold “national security while eliminating subversion and the conditions that promote its existence.” Furthermore, they promised that Argentina would soon occupy “its due place within the western Christian world.”¹⁵

Immediately following the takeover, the military declared a bank holiday and froze all accounts. The stock exchange was also closed while Congress was dissolved. The building where Congress had held sessions was quickly occupied by soldiers. All branches of the federal government were taken over. Federal employees were replaced along with workers in provincial

¹³ Amnesty International, *Mission to Argentina*, 7-10; John Simpson and Jana Bennett, *The Disappeared and the Mothers of the Plaza* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 35; Jo Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 12; Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals*, 115, 127.

¹⁴ Simpson and Bennett, *Mothers of the Plaza*, 33.

¹⁵ Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 224.

and municipal governments throughout the country while all political parties were suspended. Trade unions were also banned along with professional and student associations. The active members of the Supreme Court were removed and replaced along with the Attorney General. The junta quickly attempted to control information released by newspaper, radio, and television.¹⁶

Concerted efforts were made to attack subversion in the classroom. The junta assumed that the school systems had become a harvesting ground for terrorism and guerilla sympathy. Thus, several universities were shutdown altogether. One of the first measures introduced by the junta was Order 572 which “permitted the dismissal of ‘dangerous’ members of staff, and amounted to an instruction to purge the school and universities left-wing teaching staff.”¹⁷ The University of Buenos Aires alone witnessed the dismissal of fifteen hundred staff members. Entry requirements were tightened, many subjects were discredited altogether, and the curriculum was completely changed. Educators in psychology were forced to teach without the works of Freud and Jung, “political and economic sciences without the works of Marx and the biological sciences without the benefit of Darwin.”¹⁸ The *Encyclopedia Britannica* was even banned because it referred to the Malvinas Islands as the Falkland Islands. Together, students and teachers represented more than twenty-six percent of disappeared persons accounted for in the dirty war.¹⁹

¹⁶ Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals*, 127; Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared*, 12.

¹⁷ Simpson and Bennett, *Mothers of the Plaza*, 212.

¹⁸ Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared*, 17.

¹⁹ *Nunca Mas: The Report of the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared*, translation copyrighted by Writers and Scholars International Ltd, (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux/Index on Censorship, 1986), 448; Simpson and Bennett, *Mothers of the Plaza*, 214.

Plays, concerts, and films were also censored. The junta openly declared that the war they were waging was not simply a war against weapons or subversives but also a war of ideological penetration. They argued that the war was about the tensions between culture and counterculture, in a moment when Argentina was experiencing acute weakness in its social controls. Therefore, the military claimed that the ideas producing the guerrilla movements stemmed from the mass media. Thus, guidelines for unacceptable material came down from above. The goal was to incorporate the cultural content with the *proceso*'s mission—"there would be no contradictory or disturbing images, nothing against church, family, or state. Divorce, abortion, adultery, wife and child and elder abuse all vanished." All stories were required to contain pleasing or inspiring images while stories about institutional or generational conflict were to be avoided above all else.²⁰

Books were also censored on a grand scale. In fact, book production, which had reached 31.5 million by 1976, plummeted to 8.7 million in 1979. Massive book burning demonstrations were held at regular intervals. Many books were banned for their ideological content, while books that contained Nazi and neo-Nazi concepts, like *The SS in Action* and *Maybe Hitler Was Right*, were produced on a large scale and promoted by the junta. A number of citizens were abducted because they possessed one of any number of banned books.²¹

Immediately following the 1976 coup, the press openly praised the military for stepping in. The *Buenos Aires Herald* expressed the widespread view in an editorial on the 1976 coup:

The entire nation responded with relief when it was realized that firm hands have taken over the reins of government ... It is impossible not to admire the style of these reluctant revolutionaries ...

²⁰ Diane Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacle of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's Dirty War*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 11; Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 228.

²¹ See "PEN Says Three Countries Worst for Writers" *Associated Press*, 1 October 1980, p. 23; Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 11; Simpson and Bennett, *Mothers of the Plaza*, 210.

This was not just another coup, but a rescue operation. These are not men hungry for power, but men with a duty, which they have stated with seriousness. By their first actions, the country's new leaders appear to have won the confidence of the people ...

The government's laudable moderation in both its language and its actions has created an atmosphere which gives the country's problems a different perspective. The moral, economic and social decline of the past year and a half is daunting. It will not be easy to achieve the country's renaissance but the first steps have been taken in the right direction. The junta appears to have created the conditions in which it can expect genuine cooperation at home and from abroad.²²

Soon thereafter, members of the press were forced to submit all political reports to the armed services for criticism and revisions before it could be printed.²³ On the day of the coup, the junta issued the following instructions:

Anyone who through any medium whatsoever defends, propagates or divulges news, communiqué's or views with the purpose of disrupting, prejudicing or lessening the prestige of the activities of the Armed Forces will be subject to detention for a period of up to ten years.²⁴

Press director, Captain Alberto Corti, immediately drafted a set of guidelines known as "The Principles and Procedures to be followed by Mass Communications Media," which included defense of the family institution, the eradication of stimulants based on sexualism and criminal violence, and the elimination of all obscene words and image.²⁵ Soon thereafter, the military introduced a more stringent control of information:

As from 22 April it is forbidden to report, comment or make reference to subjects related to subversive incidents, the appearance of bodies and the deaths of subversive elements and/or

²² *Buenos Aires Herald*, editorial, 25 March 1976. Also available in Patricia Marchak, *God's Assassins: State Terror in Argentina in the 1970s* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 212.

²³ Simpson and Bennett, *Mothers of the Plaza*, 233.

²⁴ Jo Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared*, 25.

²⁵ Telegram to Henry Kissinger from U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires entitled "Juntas Relations with Local and Foreign Media," *Argentine Declassification Project* [CD-Rom] (Washington: National Security Archive, 2002), 24 March 1976, p. 1 (hereafter cited as *ADP* with corresponding date); Simpson and Bennett, *Mothers of the Plaza*, 234.

members of the armed or security forces in these incidents, unless they are reported by a responsible official source. This includes the victims of kidnappings and disappearances.²⁶

The consequence of not following these orders was often death. Although journalists represented only 1.6 percent of disappeared persons in the Dirty War, according to the National Commission on the Disappeared, some 400 journalists were forced to flee the country while several hundred more were officially exiled.²⁷

By all accounts, union and factory workers represented the single largest sector of Argentine society the junta targeted, accounting for thirty percent of the disappeared. Because the Peronist base was so well entrenched into organized labor, union and factory workers became the clearest obstacle to the junta. Unlike their military predecessors, the junta sought to eliminate the ability of organized workers to protest or carry out “Struggle Plans,” as they so often had in the past. On the night of the coup, a large number of factory and union headquarters were occupied by the armed forces. Within a matter of days, the junta had taken over hundreds of unions, revoked the right to strike, effectively banned the General Confederation of Workers, the labor sector of Peronism, and replace union leaders with military personnel. During the first ten months alone, real wages dropped by more than fifty percent. Large automotive plants such as FIAT and Ford Motor were seized while employees were forced to work extended days without breaks, often at gunpoint. Workers who participated in strikes were given a mandatory six-year prison term, while those deemed to be instigators

²⁶ Amnesty International, *Mission to Argentina*, 15.

²⁷ *Nunca Mas*, 362-368, 448; Jerry W. Knudson, “Veil of Silence: The Argentine Press and the Dirty War, 1976-1983,” *Latin American Perspectives* 24 (November 1997): 93-112; Amnesty International, *Mission to Argentina*, 15; Organization of American States, *Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Argentina*, (Washington: Organization of American States, 1980), 235-237. See also Andrew Graham-Yooll, *A State of Fear: Memories of Argentina’s Nightmare*, (London: Hippocrene Books, 1986), *passim*.

received 10 years.²⁸

For all of the repressive measures prescribed by the junta, none are worse than the methodical system of kidnapping, torture, and murder of thousands of Argentine citizens the junta deemed subversive. Yet, there were no formal criteria required for one to be labeled a subversive. All citizens were subject to being “disappeared” because laws regarding what constituted a subversive were so vaguely defined that virtually every citizen was subject to being arrested and connected with subversion.²⁹

When the junta decided that an individual was to be detained, they immediately inform the local police station so that law enforcement personnel did not respond to any calls in the area. When required, the soon-to-be abductors would ask for a “green light,” often referred to as a “free zone,” from the police. This was done either by radio or by parking for a few minutes outside the corresponding police station or central police headquarters. The process usually began by blocking off the street and sometimes the electricity in the immediate neighborhood of the targeted suspect. As often as possible, the military abducted people towards the end of the week, ensuring that a larger timeframe elapsed before the relatives of the person abducted took any action.³⁰

Once subjects were apprehended, they were blindfolded or, as the military termed it “walled-up.” They were then generally placed on the floor or in the trunk of a car. The military especially favored black or dark green colored Ford Falcons as their vehicle of choice for

²⁸ Martin Edwin Andersen, *Dossier Secreto: Argentina's Desaparecidos and the Myth of the “Dirty War,”* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 175-183; Gerardo Munck, *Authoritarianism and Democratization: Soldiers and Workers in Argentina, 1976-1983*, (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 24-160.

²⁹ Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number* (Madison: University Of Wisconsin Press, 1981). 95. Majors in Sociology, Philosophy, and Psychology were completely eliminated as the junta set about modifying university curriculums.

³⁰ Nunca Mas, 11; Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals*, 150

abductions. Nearly all individuals were subject to beatings while on their way to one of the more than 340 *pozos*, or secret detention centers established throughout the country.³¹

Upon entering the detention centers, most subjects were stripped of any possessions and taken to a small room for “interrogation.” This usually lasted a half hour but often lasted for days when authorities deemed it necessary. Rarely, interrogators found subjects to have no association with the guerrilla movements and released them.

Innocent or guilty, all prisoners were subjected to torture. Upon arrival, they were “softened up” by the guards. Particular attention was given to any areas where broken bones had resulted from the assault during capture. Many victims were buried in deep holes with their heads being the only part of the body above ground. Usually, such practices lasted until an individual decided to talk, often taking several days considering few had any actual information to offer. When they were finally taken out, “they were covered with insect bites, worms, infections, and their own excrement.”³² Yet, the majority of the disappeared were simply beaten to a state of unconsciousness by guards. “They stood me in the middle of a circle of people,” recalled Luis Alberto Urquiza, “and I would be propelled by punches and kicks towards the group, and from there back to the centre of the circle.” Such conduct could last for several hours or until the guards simply grew weary.³³

Often, there was a doctor who accompanied interrogators in the “operating rooms.” The doctor’s responsibility was to simply monitor the victim and alert the interrogator as to how much torture the victim was able to endure. A common method of torture was known as the

³¹ Marchak, *God’s Assassins*, 153; *Nunca Mas*, 51.

³² Both quotations cited in Marchak, *God’s Assassins*, 153.

³³ *Nunca Mas*, 28.

“submarine,” whereby prisoners were hung upside down and dropped in vats of water where they were left until they were on the verge of passing out. The process was repeated as often as an interrogator preferred, regularly resulting in asphyxiation or cardiac arrest.³⁴

The most common method of disposing of the bodies was to simply put them in large graves with the marking of ‘NN’ for “No Name.” Virtually every cemetery had a quota of this type of graves. Similar to the Holocaust, many prisoners were forced to dig their own graves before being shot and buried, sometimes before they had expired. Gas was commonly used in order to burn the remains or to make room for more bodies. Later, hundreds of mass graves were found.³⁵

Perhaps the most sinister method for prisoner disposal was to drop prisoners from airplanes over the South Atlantic. Hooded and shackled, prisoners were called out by number and given an inoculation shot. They were then loaded onto planes and given another dosage to render them immobile once in the air. While airborne, prisoners were stripped of their clothing and thrown out to sea. In 1995, former naval commander Adolfo Francisco Scilingo admitted that he had taken part in two such flights in April and June of 1977. He estimated that thirty prisoners were thrown out over the South Atlantic during the two flights and an estimated fifteen hundred to two thousand total bodies were disposed of in this manner.³⁶

³⁴ *Nunca Mas*, 9-209; Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, *Violations of Human Rights in Argentina: 1980*, (New York: International League for Human Rights, 1980), *passim*; Argentine Information Service Center, *Argentina Today: A Dossier on Repression and the Violation of Human Rights*, (Washington: Argentine Information Service Center, 1977), *passim*; Amnesty International, *Mission to Argentina*, 17-39; Organization of American States, *Human Rights in Argentina*, *passim*; Amnesty International, *Testimony of Secret Detention Camps in Argentina*, (London: AI Publications, 1980), *passim*; Americas Watch, *The State Department Misinforms: A Study for the Accounting for the Disappeared in Argentina*, (New York: Americas Watch, 1983), *passim*.

³⁵ Simpson and Bennett, *Mothers of the Plaza*, 32.

³⁶ For a detailed account of Scilingo’s confession, see Horacio Verbitsky, *The Flight: Confessions of an Argentine Dirty Warrior* (New York: The New Press, 1996), chapters 1-4.

Despite the fact that disappearances were widely reported and well known, human rights abuses did not lead to any large public outcry within Argentine society. Rather, it was the inability of the junta to deliver on the promise of economic stability that caused society to react. When the military came to power there were only enough funds in the treasury to last another week. However, after the coup, foreign countries began pouring money into Argentina. The junta relied heavily on the injection of foreign investments to promote economic development. Despite this, most of the public, understanding the vulnerability of the economy and taking advantage of high interest rates to make a quick profit, invested their money in short-term deposits as opposed to fixed investments. The result of this was a spiraling foreign debt that stood at nineteen billion dollars at the beginning of 1980, and ballooned to thirty-nine billion by 1982. In 1974, total debt in Argentina was equal to 5.6 percent of the budget, but by 1982 the debt rate alone had risen to consume 37.1 percent of the budget and consumed the equivalent of fifteen percent of the gross domestic product. Argentina's economy deteriorated to the point where debt service costs alone exceeded the countries total export earnings in 1982.³⁷

Adding to the economic problems was the fact that domestic interest rates were so high that it became impossible for national industry to compete with foreign producers at home. By 1979, imports were growing three times faster than exports. The proportion of industrial production in GNP fell from thirty-two percent in 1976 to twenty-eight percent in 1983. Between the years of 1979 and 1980, the number of bankruptcies increased by seventy-four percent. In fact, more than forty banks and investment firms went bankrupt in a one-year period. In 1980, four of the countries most important financial institutions collapsed as investors failed

³⁷ Thomas C Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport: Praeger, 2001), 162; Gary W. Wyma, *Argentina: Illusions and Realities* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1986), 157; Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared*, 109-110.

to meet their repayment obligations and depositors transferred their funds abroad, plunging the military's monetarist policies into crisis. In the same year a company called Sasetru, the largest grain and food-producing company in Argentina, went out of business.³⁸

These problems, coupled with the closing of the local banks and investment houses, resulted in thousands of unemployed civilians. The number of workers in the manufacturing sector alone fell from 1,165,000 in 1975 to 740,000 in 1982 (a loss of 425,000 jobs). A study by multinational companies found that fifteen percent of the urban labor force was unemployed. Labor spokesmen argue that the reduction of working hours for those in employment was the equivalent of another eight percent. By 1982, more than twenty-two percent of the nation's households were considered poor compared to eight percent in 1980.³⁹

Faced with an ailing economy, the junta was on the verge of collapse. Riots occurred throughout the country as Argentine citizens demanded free and open elections and the return to democracy. Soon, the military invaded the Falkland Islands, known to Argentines as the Malvinas, in an attempt to distract society from the economic problems at home and to put an end to their long-standing dispute with Britain. Only two months after the outbreak of war Leopoldo Galtieri, the junta president, announced Argentina's surrender to the British. Defeat in the Malvinas War ultimately cost the junta all bargaining power. Two days later, on 17 June, Galtieri resigned his post and the junta was replaced by a provisional government that pledged to hold elections. In the aftermath, a return to democracy was simply unavoidable.

Since the end of the Dirty War, numerous scholars and human rights groups have tried to estimate the number of disappeared. CONADEP, the Argentine National Commission for the

³⁸ Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared*, 109; Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals*, 180.

³⁹ Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals*, 110.

Disappeared, documented 8,960 cases. Approximately three thousand more cases have been documented since the commission reported its results, bringing the total of documented disappearances to roughly twelve thousand. In addition to this figure, there are a number of individuals who have never come forward with information. From the data presently available, the total number of disappeared is most likely to be in the area of fifteen thousand. And by adding in those individuals killed by the Triple A or guerrilla groups, the total number of victims in the dirty war era most likely totaled twenty-five to thirty thousand people.

CHAPTER 2

ARGENTINA AS A PARIAH

More than nine months after the military junta deposed Isabel Peron and initiated the dirty war, Jimmy Carter assumed the presidency of the United States. From the moment of his inauguration, the significance of human rights violations received a high place in American foreign policy. The perception within the administration that the Soviet threat had subsided rendered the probability that U.S. foreign policy could come to represent an extension of American domestic cultural and political values. Alongside Guatemala, Argentina served not only as a testing ground for Carter's foreign policy, but also the country most often targeted.

While Carter's foreign policy for the first time brought the issue of human rights to the forefront of American diplomacy, his approach was partly coupled with a desire to restore the American public's declining faith in the U.S. government following the Watergate scandal, public revelations of government involvement in overthrowing Allende in Chile, and the Vietnam War. Carter's revision of postwar foreign policy was made possible in part through the emerging appeal from the American public for an expanded focus on human rights in the mid-1970s.

Under both public and congressional pressure, the position of Coordinator for Human Rights was established within the State Department during the Ford administration.⁴⁰ The degree to which Carter cherished the issue of human rights and sought to promote it in foreign policy is best illustrated by his

⁴⁰ Mark Falcoff, *A Tale of Two Policies: U.S. Relations with the Argentine Junta, 1976-1983* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1989), 19. Falcoff was an advisor to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during the dirty war period and has written extensively on Argentina. This privileged position allowed Falcoff access to information that, at the present, is not widely available. This study deviates in part from Falcoff's assessment which is, from the author's viewpoint, too critical of the Carter administration, largely ignores the success of the administration, and only briefly mentions the grain embargo and its impact.

decision to elevate this new Coordinator's position to Assistant Secretary of State. To fill this station, he offered the post to Patricia Derian, a former nurse and civil rights activist from Mississippi who had assisted in his election campaign. In one respect, Carter and Derian's foreign policy concerning human rights can be viewed as a mere extension of their earlier work in the civil rights movement.

The degree to which her beliefs guided the president's foreign policy decisions and the influence Derian garnered internally cannot be overstated. Not only did she have the luxury of being one of the highest ranking women in the administration and the wife of Carter's press spokesman, Hodding Carter, all drafts of Derian's statements regarding Argentina only needed the clearance of Undersecretary of State Warren Christopher. Thus as the foreign policy of Carter began to be applied, Derian used her authority to pressure the Argentine junta more than any other government.⁴¹

There is little doubt why Argentina became one of the most targeted countries of Carter and Derian's foreign policy. On the sheer merits of the case, the Argentine junta represented one of the most oppressive governments in the world with respect to human rights violations. While a number of other countries numerically claimed more victims of repression, one would be hard pressed to find a single country whose brutality and open disregard for human rights paralleled or exceeded that of the Argentine military.

Despite this, it should be noted that the Carter administration often demonstrated a peculiar selectivity in terms of which countries received particular interest on the human rights front. The issue was virtually nonexistent in U.S.–Soviet relations following a visit by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Moscow in March 1977, where Soviet officials made it clear that the issue of human rights could, and most probably would, jeopardize bilateral relations concerning arms control. Despite consistent evidence of escalating abuses on Russian citizens, the administration by-and-large pursued a policy of

⁴¹ See Joseph S. Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States: A Conflicted Relationship* (Boston: Twayne's International Publications, 1990), 147.

détente with the Soviets until the invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979. Frequent abuses by the government of South Korea on its own people resulted in a temporary decrease of U.S. troop presence there. The resolution to downsize troops was only momentarily applied as the decision was soon reversed under intense congressional pressure. Likewise, human rights never received the disproportionate attention in most countries in the Middle East, Africa, or Asia, as the administration gave to the Argentine junta.⁴²

Yet, despite such discrepancies with concern to a number of abusive nations, the approach given to countries such as Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, and Guatemala, were generally lucid and coherent. At the same time, the decisions the Carter administration made with concerns to South Korea and the Soviet Union only demonstrated the disparity between a theoretical approach to foreign policy and its actual applicability in a practical situation. In retrospect, the decision of how to handle both situations illustrated the diplomatic wisdom Carter employed with concerns to the national interests of the United States. However, the move also placed the administration in the precarious situation of having to decide whether to abandon its emphasis on human rights or to apply it selectively in a manner that compensated for its lack of fervor elsewhere. Argentina provided one of the most relevant and logical countries to pursue, considering it did not figure prominently into any foreseeable Cold War conflict and had a long history of opposing U.S. efforts of Western hegemony.

Argentina as a Target

To combat the apparent widespread human rights abuses being committed in Argentina, the new administration applied pressure to the junta through a number of methods. First, the United States

⁴² As noted in Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1986), 23-24.

repeatedly voted against loan requests by Argentina to multilateral development banks and continually refused Export-Import Bank financing for Argentine purchases in the United States. Carter, his aides, and the State Department frequently condemned the Argentine junta for human rights violations. Likewise, the administration imposed an embargo on the sale of arms and spare parts under the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment of 1976 to the Foreign Assistance Act. Finally, the United States consistently championed resolutions against Argentina at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. As will be seen, the attempts by the Carter administration, as well as that of Congress, were complicated and limited by the external forces of a global economy and internal pressure primarily from the business sector.⁴³

The earliest move by the Carter administration to pressure the junta on human rights came in the form of military aid. On 24 February 1977, a month after Carter had been sworn in, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance announced to a Senate subcommittee that the administration had decided to cut military aid to Argentina from the thirty-two million dollars recommended by the Ford administration to 15.7 million. The decision, explained Vance, was based solely upon the deteriorating human rights situation in Argentina. The junta responded immediately, proclaiming the measures represented mere attempts to interfere in their country's internal affairs. On these grounds the junta refused to accept any military aid whatsoever in the forthcoming year.⁴⁴ The official response from the junta declared that "no state, regardless of its ideology or power, can take upon itself the role of an international court of

⁴³ Falcoff, *Two Policies*, 21; Arie M. Kacowicz, *Human Rights and Foreign Policy: The Argentine Case, 1976-1983* (Jerusalem: The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations/Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997), 9-10.

⁴⁴ Vance's announcement came in his first appearance before the appropriations subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Operations Committee. Other countries to receive aid cuts were Brazil, Guatemala, and El Salvador. See Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance and Related Programs, *Foreign Assistance and Related Programs Appropriations, Fiscal Year 1978*, 95th Cong., 1st sess., 1977 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 196; Martin Edwin Andersen, *Dossier Secreto: Argentina's Desaparecidos and the Myth of the "Dirty War"* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 251; Lars Schoultz, *Human Rights and United States Policy Toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 257-260, 295.

justice and interfere in the internal affairs of other countries,” and that such actions represented “a deplorable abnormality in the conduct of international relations.”⁴⁵ Only a few weeks later officials at the U.S. embassy in Buenos Aires cabled the State Department to inform them that:

High ranking GOA [Government of Argentina] officials are shaken by our action... We see no evidence that they are prepared to cede to external pressures in the foreseeable future... They do not comprehend how US interests possibly could be served through a violent takeover of Argentina by armed bands of loosely Marxist or nihilistic Argentine youth whose leaders originally were trained in Cuba. Although they have not asked for US material aid in dealing with the terrorist problem, they feel that they deserve our moral support and not this unkind blow from what they thought was a friendly power.

The casual manner in which the FMS [Foreign Military Sales] cut was announced... and the apparent US double standard vis-à-vis South Korea... further wounded their pride and heightened their anger... We have found high-ranking military contacts to be unusually and brutally frank... [The FMS cut] convinced them that the USG considers Argentina unimportant and a country which can be singled out for punishment with impunity.⁴⁶

An immediate downturn in U.S.–Argentine relations followed the announcements. Not only did the statements of Vance elicit condemnation from the junta, they were also criticized by the general public in Argentina. In a meeting on 8 March 1977, between U.S. embassy official Kenneth Hill and Mickey Alurralde, editor of the Buenos Aires based *Carta Politica*, Alurralde noted that the decision on “military assistance to Argentina was received with consternation and concern in his country.” Likewise, Alurralde questioned Hill as to whether the U.S. government actually understood that Argentina was involved in a full-blown civil war. “American human rights reporting,” stated Alurralde, “and public statements about Argentina were tantamount to interference in Argentine affairs. He stated it would be easy for the government to fall back on anti-Americanism.”⁴⁷ Likewise, the American

⁴⁵ As cited in “Argentina Assails U.S. Decision to Reduce Arms Aid,” *The Washington Post*, 1 March 1977, sec. C, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Cable from U.S. embassy, Buenos Aires, to Department of State entitled “Argentine Reactions to Human Rights Issue,” *ADP*, 16 March 1977, p. 1-3, 7.

embassy noted that “editorials this past week fairly uniformly played on [the] theme of anomalies in US policy and defended GOA’s [Government of Argentina’s] defense of its national sovereignty.”⁴⁸

Despite the political fallout resulting from the decision to cut military aid, the U.S. government continued to pressure the junta. Shortly after the reduction in military aid was announced, the House of Representatives discussed a proposal to prohibit all commercial arms sales and military training to Argentina. It should be noted that the Carter administration actually opposed the proposed measures, believing such actions might have adverse effects and further jeopardize U.S.–Argentine relations. This decision was primarily a result of the political backlash the administration received from the junta. As one representative argued, “President Carter had exercised the commonsense and wisdom that acknowledges that there are limits to how far the United States can go in promoting human rights without producing undesired results.”⁴⁹ An intense debate over the proposal followed, resulting in a narrow defeat by two hundred votes to 187.⁵⁰

Although the House bill to prohibit all commercial arms sales and military training failed, Senator Edward Kennedy introduced a nearly identical amendment in the Senate soon thereafter, receiving the support of Frank Church, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. The proposal put forth by Kennedy not only sought to ban arms sales and training but also prohibited current military contracts, aid, and sales established prior to its passing. Yet the Carter administration argued that a period of one year was needed in order to influence the Argentine junta to improve the human rights

⁴⁷ Memorandum of conversation between Mickey Alurralde and Kenneth Hill entitle “U.S. Human Rights Policy and Argentina,” *ADP*, 8 March 1977, p. 1-2.

⁴⁸ Cable from U. S. Embassy, Buenos Aires, to Secretary of State Vance entitled “Human Rights Round-Up No. 12,” *ADP*, 9 March 1977, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Congress, House, Representative Zablocki of Wisconsin speaking for the International Security Assistance Act of 1977 to the House of Representatives, H. R. 6884, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 123, pt. 13 (23 May 1977), 15899.

⁵⁰ For a full record of the debate see Congress, House, *International Security Assistance Act of 1977*, 95th Congress, 1st sess., H.R. 6884, *Congressional Record*, 123, pt. 13 (23 May 1977), 15885-15905.

situation. Argentina had previously acquired over \$54.4 million of American credit, money with which Carter hoped to barter. At the behest of the administration, Senator Hubert Humphrey offered a softer substitute and engineered a compromise with Kennedy whereby all pipeline aid continued unabated, a presidential waiver was permitted, and the bill did not go into effect until October 1978. After serious negotiations, the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment was announced and the Senate version of the bill quickly passed, formally amending the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and effectively prohibiting all military aid to Argentina in the form of credits, export licenses, sales, grants, and loan guarantees after the agreed upon date of 30 September 1978.⁵¹

Similar to the administration's earlier attempt to compel the junta through economic means, the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment failed to have the desired effect of improving the human rights situation in Argentina. The embassy in Buenos Aires again reported to the State Department of the military's resolve, irrespective of whether or not the U.S. applied sanctions. From the perspective of the Argentine military, the country was locked in a full-blown civil war. Thus, the consequences of prolonging or even losing the war by relaxing current measures far outweighed any foreseeable progress in terms of bilateral relations with the United States. Furthermore, the junta considered the issue of human rights as secondary to the internal security of the country. Abuses and excesses were merely an unfortunate result of the war itself and could not be curtailed.⁵²

Considering they had little less than a year before the 30 September cutoff, the junta needed to acquire enough essential resources to last until either the relationship between the two countries improved to a point of normalcy, the U.S. backed off its human rights policy, or until trade relations had been established with other countries from whom Argentina could buy equipment. The desire to obtain

⁵¹ Schoultz, *Human Rights and United States Policy*, 260.

⁵² For the assessment by the American Embassy, see report entitled "Argentina: Human Rights and Bilateral Relations," *ADP*, 17 May 1978, p.1-4

much needed goods and parts actually hastened trade between the two countries in 1977 and 1978. At odds with what Congress and the administration had hoped to attain, U.S. government and commercial sales to Argentina totaled \$120 million worth of spare parts alone in the interlude period. At the same time, the Argentine military acquired five Chinook helicopters, two C130 military transporters, and 15 Beechcraft trainer aircraft. Likewise, the junta simply found other sources of foreign credits and financing or easily acquired funding from private banks in Western Europe and Japan. The United States only supplied Argentina with approximately a third of its total military purchases in 1976. Worldwide suppliers quickly rushed to replace the segments the U.S. government had relinquished. Therefore, it was quite painless for the junta to obtain military goods through traditional partners such as Canada, West Germany, South Africa, and Israel. To their despair, the administration and Congress quickly realized that there were limitations to what could be achieved through economic sanctions in a global market.⁵³

Despite the lack in proof of positive results, the Carter administration continued to pressure the junta. Before the end of 1977, the U.S. government had opposed all five Argentine loan requests from the Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) totaling \$304 million. Although American pressure did not deter the loans from going through, it should be noted that Argentina was by-and-large the predominate target chosen by the administration for blocking MDB loans. To place this in perspective, the United States government totaled ninety-nine “no” votes and abstentions for MDB loans between 1945 and 1980. Of those ninety-nine, no less than fifty-three were against six countries in Latin America. In a period of less than three years, the Carter administration voted against twenty-three MDB loan proposals from Argentina alone, representing roughly the same percentage of the total negative votes the U.S. cast

⁵³Karen DeYoung and Charles A. Krause, “Our Mixed Signals on Human Rights in Argentina,” *Washington Post*, 29 September 1978, sec. C, p. 1; Ian Guest, *Behind the Disappearances: Argentina’s Dirty War against Human Rights and the United Nations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 166; Falcoff, *Tale of Two Policies*, 21-22.

in a thirty-five year period. The only votes the administration supported were for loans that fulfilled humanitarian objectives. Regardless of whether the U.S. voted against a particular loan or simply chose to abstain, either decision was symbolically equivalent from the viewpoint of the junta.⁵⁴

By mid-1978, the status of human rights in Argentina showed no signs of improvement. An internal report from the U.S. State Department drafted in May 1978 stated that there was neither “consistent movement toward human rights compliance nor any real prospect for a rapid return to the rule of law.” The only positive note was an apparent decline in the rate of disappearances since mid-1977. The progress of American diplomacy was summarized in the report noting that “US actions, unsupported by other governments and private leaders and investors, probably cannot force rapid changes in the present situation.” However, there was potential that the pressure exerted on the junta was paying off when more than a month later the government of Argentina officially invited the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC) to survey the situation in their country.⁵⁵

The prospects for a stronger bilateral relationship dissipated as quickly as they began when bureaucratic tensions in Washington reached a boiling point in late summer 1978. The controversy surrounded the Carter administration’s attempted blocking of a major Export-Import Bank (EXIM) loan to Argentina totaling \$270 million. Due to overwhelming internal demands, the administration promptly reversed its denial of the loan in September 1978. Yet, the controversy had devastating results in terms of U.S.-Argentine relations and further exasperated the government of Argentina.

The details of the EXIM Bank loan are vague at best, yet merit further examination. In a joint project, the governments of Argentina and Paraguay worked for several years to develop a hydroelectric

⁵⁴ Schoultz, *Human Rights and United States Policy*, 295-298.

⁵⁵ Report entitled “Argentina: Human Rights and Bilateral Relations,” *ADP*, 17 May 1978, p. 1; For information on the IAHRC announcement see “Argentina Invites OAS Human Rights Commission,” *ADP*, 22 June 1978, p. 1-3.

dam on the Parana River. In order for the project to be finalized, the governments needed to acquire twenty-seven turbines to be used to operate the dam. This required the building of a major plant in the shipyard known as Astilleros Argentinos where the turbines would be developed. Among the numerous companies who offered bids to build the plant was the well-known U.S. firm Allis Chalmers. On 3 April 1978, Allis Chalmers officially inquired to the EXIM bank for a letter of interest regarding its willingness to support the firm monetarily if the decision was made to build the Astilleros Argentinos turbine plant.⁵⁶

It should be noted that the EXIM Bank loan conformed to all U.S. government limitations already placed on the junta. The loan request qualified as a non-military sale, served humanitarian needs, and only involved a private corporation attempting to promote its services to a country facing a serious energy crisis. Yet, from the viewpoint of the Carter administration, Argentina was merely attempting to procure much needed U.S. funding by using the auspices of Allis Chalmers as a deterrent front. The convictions of the administration were well warranted. It is clear that financing from other countries, as well as private investors, was clearly available, particularly in Japan and Europe. Yet the government of Argentina purportedly encouraged Allis Chalmers to approach the EXIM bank.⁵⁷

From the viewpoint of the Carter administration, the Allis Chalmers controversy was a test of their resolve on the human rights front. Concessions in any arena by the administration held the potential of opening the door to sidestepping the issue of human rights altogether. In a 26 June 1978 cable to Argentine ambassador Raul Castro, Cyrus Vance noted:

⁵⁶ EXIM Bank offers insurance, loans, and guarantees to exporters in the U.S. On 27 October 1977, EXIM was brought within the capacity of U.S. human rights legislation which required the bank to consult with the Secretary of State on the status of human rights conditions in the anticipated country of the recipient, irrespective of whether the funding was intended for private, commercial, or governmental means. Thus, all loans approved by EXIM Bank thereafter were done so at the behest of the present administration. The best background information on the EXIM Bank loan is found in Guest, *Behind the Disappearances*, 164-179, 497.

⁵⁷ Guest, *Behind the Disappearances*, 496-497.

Any prospect that we might have considered the EXIM bank financing apart from human rights matters was eliminated by [the] insistence that the Government of Argentina looked upon restrictions on EXIM financing as [a] political act and clearly sought approval of such financing as [an] indication of U.S. acceptance.⁵⁸

Derian, Vance's deputy, latter admitted in an interview that she viewed the EXIM Bank loan as an attempt to "break the back of her campaign"; the issue served as a crucial trial of Derian's determination to keep up pressure on Argentina regarding human rights issues.⁵⁹

From this viewpoint the administration moved quickly to turn the proposed loan into a human rights dilemma with the goal of gaining some form of compromise from the junta. The objective was to offer a vote in favor of the EXIM loan if, in return, the Argentine military agreed to allow an official visit from the human rights investigating division of the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHRC). To further attract the junta, it was agreed that some 212 Argentine military personnel would resume joint training operations with the U.S. military.

The results from the "carrot and stick" approach came quickly. On 25 May 1978, after a full day of consultations with officials in Argentina, Undersecretary of State David Newsom cabled Ambassador Castro to inform that "favorable steps... [were] being taken in [the] human rights field in Argentina." Furthermore, Newsom authorized Ambassador Castro to inform president Videla that the decision had been reached to once again "resume... military training."⁶⁰ Soon thereafter, the junta informed diplomats that a decision had been reached to invite the IAHRC. Despite this, issues soon arose between the military and the IAHRC concerning the specifics of the visit. In a meeting between Ambassador Castro and Argentine Deputy Foreign Minister Allara, the Foreign Minister complained

⁵⁸See cable from Vance to the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires entitled "Human Rights and U.S. Programs in Argentina," *ADP*, 26 June 1978, p. 1.

⁵⁹ As cited in Guest, *Behind the Disappearances*, 171.

⁶⁰Cable from Newsom to Castro, "Argentina Human Rights," *ADP*, 25 May 1978, p. 1.

that that the IAHRC had proposed numerous questions that the junta felt “were offensive and unrealistic.” Specifics about the questions posed by the IAHRC have never been disclosed, but what can be observed is that the Junta and the IAHRC simply did not come to an agreement over the intended visit.⁶¹

On 10 July Secretary of State Vance officially informed John Moore, Chairman of the Export-Import Bank, that the IAHRC did “not find Argentina’s invitation in a form it can accept.” He notified Moore that “in View of this we have decided that we must recommend against Export-Import Bank’s financing at this time of the Allis Chalmers application for the ...Hydro-electric project.”⁶² Likewise, Vance notified embassy officials in Buenos Aires of the decision but noted that Argentine officials were to be informed that funding might not be opposed if it were privately financed. The decision was not announced until 20 July.⁶³

If the administration had been surprised by the protests that arose following FMS cuts, they were certainly ill-prepared for the backlash that followed the Allis Chalmers decision. Thereafter, relations between the junta and the Carter administration were defined by open hostility exerted by Argentine officials. The story made front-page headlines in nearly all newspapers in Argentina. The decision concerning EXIM Bank loans to Allis Chalmers was viewed by much of the Argentine military and society as a public and formal accusation of their country. Likewise, the administration received intense pressure from the American business sector which, coupled with the fallout in bilateral relations, virtually forced them to withdraw their refusal to support the Allis Chalmers loan.

⁶¹ Cable from Castro to Cyrus Vance, “Human Rights; Ambassador Chats with Capt. Allara,” *ADP*, 20 July 1978, p. 1-3.

⁶² For a complete record of Vance’s letter to Moore see “Argentina Human Rights,” *ADP*, 10 July 1978, p. 1.

⁶³ “Human Rights and U.S. Programs in Argentina,” *ADP*, 26 June 1978, p.1.

In a highly charged discussion with Argentine officials in July 1978, American Ambassador Castro was asked to explain why the U.S. government chose to “clothe itself with laws that are non-existent, use these laws to our detriment and then keep telling us you are our friends.” The conversation continued to be confrontational with officials demanding an explanation as to what “building a dam... [had] to do with human rights.”⁶⁴ In a cable to Vance in August 1978, Castro noted that he was issued an official note of protest against the U.S. government from Argentina’s Foreign Minister. As the Foreign Minister exclaimed, “the last incident of EXIM Bank denying credits to GOA is more than we can tolerate. We consider that an intrusion into the affairs of a sovereign government.”⁶⁵ In an internal report Castro filed soon after the meeting, he noted:

This was my first outing in Argentina where I could sense a feeling of bitterness towards the USG. I have covered most of Argentina’s provinces by now and the welcomes have always been most positive. It became abundantly clear that EXIM’s Bank refusal to approve financing for the...Dam project in Argentina has caused a wave of general negative reaction toward the US.⁶⁶

At the same time, Allis Chalmers mounted a massive lobbying campaign in an attempt to have the decision reversed. David Scott, the chairman of Allis Chalmers, informed the administration that the dam project could be worth as much as eighteen million working hours for American workers. Numerous other corporations joined in warning that such policies jeopardized current and future contracts and their continuation would result in job losses. Internally, even members of the administration expressed doubts as to the validity of the decision. Andrew Young, the Permanent Representative to the United Nations, warned National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski that the

⁶⁴ Cable from Castro to Cyrus Vance, “Human Rights; Ambassador Chats with Capt. Allara,” *ADP*, 20 July 1978, p. 1.3.

⁶⁵ Cable from Ambassador Castro to Vance, “Human Rights: Note of Protest from Foreign Minister,” *ADP*, 4 August 1978, p. 1-2.

⁶⁶ Report from Castro to Secretary of State Vance entitled “Human Rights: Ambassador’s Trip to Northern Argentina,” *ADP*, 7 August 1978, p. 4.

resolution with EXIM Bank loans to Allis Chalmers had set a precedent that would eventually deny jobs to U.S. workers. Despite these moves, it was several months before the administration abandoned its decision.⁶⁷

In August 1978 Patricia Derian was called before the House Foreign Affairs Committee to discuss the human rights situation in Argentina. In her testimony, Derian stated that there was so “much evidence of human rights violations in Argentina...that to argue about it would be a waste of time.” Noting that Argentina had a serious human rights problem, Derian once again charged the junta with “systematic tortures” and “summary executions.” While undoubtedly accurate, Derian’s statements could not have come at a more inopportune time. In the already highly charged atmosphere of bilateral relations, Derian’s testimony was the second “bombshell,” as Ambassador Castro deemed it, in a relatively short period of time.⁶⁸

The very utterance of Argentina from Derian’s lips had, for a while, received front page headlines in Argentina. Yet, her testimony unleashed a furious outcry from even the few objective journalists remaining in Argentina. Derian assumed the position of public enemy number one for the following three weeks, claiming the front page of every major newspaper from *La Prensa* to the *Buenos Aires Herald*. The *Herald* rightfully observed that “rarely have relations between the two countries been as strained as now.” The official response from the junta proclaimed Derian’s statements represented “a demonstration of regrettable irresponsibility of a high-ranking official,” and were rejected “not only because of the clumsy distortion of reality which they imply, but also because of the use of false and tendentious information which...is an insult to the Argentine people.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See Roland Evans and Robert Novak, “Human-Rights Zeal that Costs U.S. Jobs,” *Washington Post*, 18 September 1978, sec. A, p. 14.

⁶⁸ As cited in “Derian Testimony to House Foreign Affairs Committee,” *ADP*, 10 August 1978, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Both quotations as cited in “GOA Rejects Derian Statements,” *ADP*, 11 August 1978, p. 1-2.

The Pressure Pays Off

No human rights situation garnered greater concern in Washington than that of Argentina in the 1970s. Yet it was not long before human rights advocates and a number of politicians demanded results. How many lives were being saved? Had prison conditions improved? Was the practice of disappearances declining? To answer these questions was merely impossible, primarily due to the lack of available data. Disappearances, it could be reported publicly, were declining.⁷⁰ Yet, aside from this fact, few absolutes were available. While the pressures the administration and Congress placed on the junta failed to elicit positive results on a broad scale, it should not be overlooked that some progress and concessions were made by the junta, primarily the release of U.S. citizens and businessmen. Overall, two important victories were accomplished in the field of human rights: the release of noted journalist Jacobo Timerman in 1979; and the junta's decision to allow the IAHRC to visit Argentina. Both were a direct result of intense pressure from the administration and merit further attention in light of the preponderance of disappointments witnessed between 1977 and 1980.

As discussed above, serious tensions were created surrounding the proposed visit by the IAHRC. Despite the administration's decision to decline EXIM Bank loans to Allis Chalmers, negotiations on a visit from the IAHRC were still heavily discussed between the two countries as were the prospects of a reverse decision on the EXIM loan. By September 1978, bilateral relations had erupted into open hostility. In an attempt to diffuse the situation, Roberto Viola, retired general of the Argentine army,

⁷⁰ The decline of disappearances was widely used by the Carter administration as evidence to support its belief that sanctions were indeed working. The numbers of disappearances were reported with relative accuracy due primarily to compilations made by embassy officials taken from press reports and witnesses who provided testimonies. These results were reported in a weekly and, in some cases, biweekly human rights roundup bulletin which circulated internally within the U. S. State Department and the U. S. Embassy in Buenos Aires. This information was continually used publicly to bolster the assertion that the Carter administration's foreign policy towards Argentina was proactive.

proposed a meeting between Videla and vice president Walter Mondale on August 31. Both were scheduled to be in Rome the following week to attend the formal installation of Pope John Paul I. The setting offered the perfect opportunity for high level discussions.⁷¹

On 4 September the two leaders met in Rome and came to an agreement. The junta promised to issue an open invitation and work out differences with the IAHRC before 23 October. In response, the U.S. agreed to withdraw its reservations concerning the Allis Chalmers loan before the 15 September deadline for bids on the dam project. Furthermore, the U.S. pledged to reconsider certain FMS credits if the junta continued to demonstrate signs of improvement. Videla assured Mondale that the U.S. would “definitely see improvements in the human rights field.”⁷²

In retrospect, the administration’s use of the EXIM Bank loan as an incentive was dubious at best. While a deal was brokered, Mondale did warn Videla that, unless the IAHRC was allowed to visit, the decision on the Allis Chalmers loan would never be reversed. Yet, corporate lobbying had turned the tide of Congressional opinion to such a point that, by the time of the Videla-Mondale meeting in Rome, a reversal on the loan was almost guaranteed, as Mondale was clearly aware. Thus, if Mondale had attempted, as he had threatened, to continue to block the EXIM loans, the administration may very well have been overridden by Congress. At the same time, bilateral relations had reached a climax over economic sanctions and human rights. In light of this, it is apparent that the administration desired to rid itself of the Allis Chalmers controversy without the need to mitigate its decision. Since the Mondale–Videla agreement involved a private understanding, the Carter administration’s decision to officially cease opposition to the EXIM loan and junta’s conclusion to allow the IAHRC to visit were not publicly

⁷¹ Guest, *Behind the Disappearances*, 173-175.

⁷² As cited in Embassy telegram from Castro to the White House entitled, “Meeting Between the Vice President and President Videla,” *ADP*, 8 September 1978, p. 2; memorandum of conversation from John Corr entitled “Videla-Mondale, Military Unity, Political Activity,” *ADP*, 15 September 1978, p. 1-2; Guest, *Behind the Disappearances*, 173-175.

linked. Likewise, while Videla was afforded the luxury of not appearing to have succumbed to U.S. pressure, the Carter administration succeeded in interposing a regional organization viewed by both the Argentine public and military as legitimate and objective.⁷³

The release of Jacobo Timerman in 1979 was yet another sign of progress made by the Carter administration. Timerman, the editor of *La Opinion*, was arrested 15 April 1977. His arrest came after the death of *La Opinion*'s financial backer and former government minister, David Gravier. Gravier was under investigation over the collapse of two U.S. banks until his untimely death in a plane crash in Mexico in August 1976. Following his death, a series of investigations resulted in the discovery that Gravier was connected to the Montoneros guerrillas who had previously deposited between twelve and twenty-five million dollars into one of his banks. The guerrillas earned interest on this sum, that helped provide monetary support for their operations. Thus, Timerman became a possible suspect because of his ties with Gravier.⁷⁴

Perhaps no single prisoner received as much attention by the U.S. government as did Jacobo Timerman. He was held incommunicado for several months, severely tortured, and beaten until a military court found him innocent of all charges. Despite the ruling, Timerman remained in prison by executive order, although he was no longer tortured. In 1978 the Argentine Supreme Court ruled that there existed no legal basis for his continued detention. The Supreme Court ruling was ignored and Timerman was placed under house arrest for several more months before being allowed to leave the country. In all, Timerman spent a total of twenty-nine months either as a prisoner or under house arrest. The issue of Timerman's status was generally, with few exceptions, the first issue addressed by

⁷³ For a complementary analysis of the IAHR agreement, see Lisa L. Martin and Kathryn Sikkink, "U.S. Policy and Human Rights in Argentina and Guatemala, 1973-1980," in *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics*, Peter B. Evans, et. al, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 330-362.

⁷⁴ Cable from Ambassador Hill to Vance entitled "Summary of Basic Elements Involved in Gravier Scandal," ADP, 18 April 1977, p.1-2.

Ambassador Castro to the junta. In their first meeting following Timerman's release, General Viola laughed when Ambassador Castro presented a list of two names, noting that he didn't know what the two could possibly discuss now that Timerman had been freed.⁷⁵

Although hardliners in the military vehemently opposed the release of Timerman and, in some cases, even threatened to resign, the international campaign—primarily led by the Carter administration—on behalf of Timerman eventually paid off. The final blow came when Videla, his justice minister, and all five members of the Supreme Court threatened to resign if Timerman was not released. Although the decision was made primarily to stop condemnation of the junta, the military paid a great price when Timerman subsequently published his powerful memoir *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, detailing his disappearance and torture at the hands of the Argentine military.⁷⁶

At the end of 1979 the stage had been set for the grain embargo. While Carter's foreign policy alienated Argentina and bolstered their ties with foreign governments while often producing little or no visible results, the administration had managed to elicit some concessions. With the advent of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Carter's announcement of a grain embargo, U.S.–Argentine relations entered a new dimension literally overnight. Suddenly, the roles were reversed. The ball was in Argentina's court. Everything—the blocking of MDB loans and grants, public denunciations by Carter and Derian, the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment, the Allis Chalmers controversy, and the Timerman affair—played prominently into the decision-making process of the junta during the grain embargo negotiations. With the newfound significance Argentina assumed during the grain embargo, both Carter and then President Reagan moved to reverse all previous strategies and improve relations. Thus, the grain embargo represented the turning point in U.S. policy towards the junta.

⁷⁵ See "Background on the Timerman Case," *ADP*, 18 September 1979, *passim*; Cable from Castro to Vance entitled "Discussion of Human rights and Economic Problems with Gen. Viola," *ADP*, 12 October 1979, p. 1-2.

⁷⁶ Timerman's book remains in wide circulation today.

CHAPTER 3

THE 1980 GRAIN EMBARGO NEGOTIATIONS

While Argentina assumed a minor role in the Carter administration's foreign policy objectives, U.S.–Soviet relations continued to dominate American national security interests. Thus, when in October 1979, following a three-day airlift, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the parameters of bilateral relations with Argentina were swept up in other, more pressing matters. As will be seen, relations with Argentina quickly assumed a newfound relevance to the Carter administration in view of events in the Middle East, prompting a reassessment of the policies pursued in the previous three years.

Soon after the invasion, Soviet troops occupied the government palace in Kabul, murdered their former partner, President Hafizullah Amin, and began occupying the remainder of the country. Amin, leader of the Khalq division of the Afghan communists, the People's Democratic Part of Afghanistan (PDPA), was soon replaced by the head of the Parcham faction of the PDPA, Babrak Karmal. In an attempt to establish a government that effectively controlled anti-communist rebels, the Soviets formed a coalition between the two factions. In an effort to moderate the reactions of Western powers, the Soviets cabled all major capitals in the Western world stating:

We are responding to an appeal for help from the Afghan leadership to repel outside aggression. We are responding with limited forces and for a limited time and as soon as the need is through, we will get out.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Congress, House, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, *East-West Relations in the Aftermath of Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Hearings before the House of Representatives*, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 24 and 30 January 1980 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1980), 35.

From the viewpoint of the Carter administration, the excuse was nearly laughable, considering the man whom the Soviets claimed had pleaded for assistance had been assassinated and subsequently replaced. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan represented a grave threat to the Middle East region and the national security interests of the United States. The Soviets had rarely shied away from using its forces to maintain hegemony over the Warsaw Pact countries in the past. Yet, this represented the first time they had used their troops to expand their sphere of authority since the February 1968 overthrowing of the government of Czechoslovakia and subsequent establishment of a puppet government under Soviet direction. Likewise, success in Afghanistan gave the Soviets the ability to threaten the prosperous oil fields of the Persian Gulf and further expand communism throughout the region.

Still, the Soviet invasion came as little surprise to those within the administration. The State Department consistently warned the Soviet Union to refrain from intrusion into Afghanistan's internal affairs as early as March 1979. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski told Carter in late July that "the Soviets would probably unseat Prime Minister Amin."⁷⁸ And, as Cyrus Vance recalled, "by the middle of 1979, there were unmistakable signs of Soviet dissatisfaction," while Afghan leaders were clearly "ignoring Moscow's advice."⁷⁹ In his memoirs Carter recalled that, since May 1979, his administration "had been observing closely the increased Soviet presence in Afghanistan, and admonishing the Soviets about their obvious moves towards intervention in the political affairs of the small neighboring country." U.S. embassy officials stationed in Kabul cabled the State Department in late June 1979, noting that

⁷⁸Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar Straus, 1983), 427.

⁷⁹ As cited by Vance in his book *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 385.

the Soviet removal of Amin from power was anticipated. Later, Carter noted that several thousand military personnel were stationed in and around Kabul by September 1979.⁸⁰

By September 1979, the administration recognized an invasion of Afghanistan was imminent. Brzezinski notes in his memoirs that contingency plans were already being prepared by September “in the event of an overt Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.”⁸¹ U.S. representatives met with Soviet officials in Washington and Moscow no less than five times to discuss the Afghan situation. Likewise, the cabinet had already begun finalizing contingency plans and appropriate political responses to the invasion by 10 December.⁸²

Despite this level of awareness, the first formal National Security Council meeting was not held until 28 December. By this time, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was virtually completed. Yet, it was in this meeting that the first official reaction to the offensive was approved. In his first response to the invasion, Carter sent Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev perhaps the strongest message of his entire presidency: “Unless you draw back from your present course of action, this will inevitably jeopardize the course of United States-Soviet relations throughout the world. I urge you to take prompt constructive action to withdraw your forces and cease interference in Afghanistan’s internal affairs.” Brezhnev responded quickly, reiterating his country’s promise to withdraw “as soon as the reasons which prompted the Afghan

⁸⁰See Stuart Auerbach, “U.S. Cautions Soviets on Interfering in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, 24 March 1979, sec. A, p. 12; “U.S. Is Indirectly Pressing Russians to Halt Afghanistan Intervention,” *New York Times*, 3 August 1979, sec. A, p. 1; Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 471; see also, Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1985), 940-944.

⁸¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 427.

⁸² The meetings between U.S. and Soviet Officials took place on December 8, 11, 15, 17, and 27 of 1979. See Congress, House, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, *East-West Relations in the Aftermath of Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, 112.

request...disappear.”⁸³

Yet, the Carter administration was caught in a rather precarious situation. Strong actions were needed, but an erroneous decision could have adverse effects on the region and in U.S.-Soviet relations. With an upcoming reelection campaign in the works, Carter could ill-afford to appear weak in his handling of Soviet aggression. At the same time, an overt response held the prospects of potentially resulting in a full blown confrontation that would certainly have been detrimental to Carter’s reelection ambitions, considering the Iowa primary was only weeks away.

The scope of sanctions the administration considered were discussed in a series of high level meetings with cabinet members at the White House between 30 December 1979 and 4 January 1980. In all, forty possible sanctions and punitive measures were considered, ranging from limiting Soviet fishing rights in U.S. waters to military assistance to Pakistan and Afghan rebels. However, no one in the administration believed any of these actions would result in a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Rather, they were intended to render the invasion as costly as possible to the Soviet Union’s economy and international standing.⁸⁴

The prospects of direct military involvement by the United States were deemed to be both unnecessary and unfeasible. Yet, other considerations were less fluid and an intense debate transpired internally between the National Security Council, which endorsed softer sanctions, and supporters of hard-line sanctions within the State Department. Both factions agreed that a swift response, coupled with broad measures, was needed. Prior to the discussions, both drew up separate lists of possible sanctions. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and the State department believed that every punitive action possible, aside from a complete military standoff, desperately

⁸³ As cited in Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 472.

⁸⁴ See Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 430-437.

needed to be employed. Yet, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and the NSC held strong in their conviction that an overt reaction from the U.S. could seriously damage future relations with the Soviets.⁸⁵

By 2 January, the administration had agreed on twenty-six measures. Among the sanctions were the following: suspension of scientific-cultural cooperation; covert aid to Afghan rebels; suspension of high technology licenses to the Soviet Union; a request to Congress for the deferral of consideration of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT II); and consideration for a possible boycott of the Moscow Olympics.⁸⁶ Two issues were not resolved: the possibility of establishing a cooperative defense relationship between the U.S. and the People's Republic of China, including large amounts of arms sales, and the implementation of a grain embargo. The issue of arms sales to China was easily overcome when the administration decided to offer the Chinese a favored treatment in trade and non-lethal military and high technology equipment.

Yet, the issue of the proposed grain embargo quickly developed into the most controversial subject debated in administration circles. The embargo negotiations were complicated because of their domestic political and economic implications. Furthermore, the grain embargo was limited by previous agreements on grain acquisitions made between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Under the 1975 grain agreement with the Nixon administration, the Soviets were effectively licensed to buy a minimum of six million metric tons of wheat and corn but no more than eight million tons without the approval of the U.S. government. Thus, by 1980,

⁸⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 430-437; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 476; Vance, *Hard Choices*, 387-391; Vacs, *1980 Grain Embargo*, 4-5.

⁸⁶ A thorough listing of all twenty-six sanctions and their implications can be found in a report prepared by the Congressional Research Service; Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *An Assessment of the Afghanistan Sanctions: Implications for Trade and Diplomacy in the 1980s*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1981). For background on the discussions, see Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 430-431; and Vance, *Hard Choices*, 389-392.

a disproportionate number of farmers and agricultural businesses had come to rely heavily on Soviet acquisitions of U.S. grain.⁸⁷

On the one hand, advocates such as Vance, Agricultural Secretary Robert Bergland, White House Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan, and Council to the President Lloyd Cutler supported the proposed embargo on the grounds that the measure represented a test of the administration's resolve. Vance, who even went so far as to support registration for the draft, recalled the negotiations in his memoirs stating:

There would be no quick return to "business as usual," as was the case after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The most important of the sanctions that were imposed was the embargo on new grain sales to the Soviet Union. No other measure was as costly to the Soviet Union or as clear a demonstration that the United States was prepared to accept significant sacrifices to impose a price for aggression.⁸⁸

On the other hand, Vice President Walter Mondale led the attack in opposition to the embargo. For Mondale and his supporters, the proposed embargo on grain would seriously damage the administration's political capital by its economic consequences to American farmers. Hamilton Jordan recalls Mondale telling Carter, "Mr. President, we need to be strong and firm, but that doesn't mean you have to commit political suicide."⁸⁹

Mondale's attempt to influence Carter's decision certainly did not fall on deaf ears. In his 1976 presidential campaign, Carter had promised not to impose any type of grain embargo, as Nixon had attempted several times in the 1970s in efforts to stabilize domestic markets, unless the national security interests of the country were threatened. For many Americans, Carter had

⁸⁷ Vacs, *1980 Grain Embargo*, 3.

⁸⁸ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 389.

⁸⁹ As quoted in Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 100.

effectively promised not to interfere in the grain market under any circumstances. Furthermore Mondale's views were supported by the Department of Agriculture which released a study that concluded that the implementation of such sanctions would not be detrimental to the Soviet economic system.⁹⁰

Despite Mondale's opposition and the Department of Agriculture's assessment, the opinion of those who supported the embargo did not change. In fact, what most likely persuaded Carter's decision was a report compiled by the Central Intelligence Agency which concluded that an embargo on grain would be severely detrimental to Soviet meat output and produce large-scale economic problems.⁹¹

On 4 January Carter decided to enforce the embargo. As he put it:

How am I going to lead the West and persuade our allies to impose sanctions against the Russians if we aren't willing to make some sacrifices ourselves?

...God knows I have walked the fields of Iowa and know those farmers and realize that I promised them in the seventy-six campaign that I would never embargo grains except in a national emergency! But this is an emergency and I'm going to have to impose the embargo, and we'll just have to make the best of it.⁹²

From Carter's perspective, other economic sanctions would have a detrimental effect on the Soviet economy, but the grain embargo offered the most considerable prospect of serious punishment for Soviet aggression. Likewise, such a move demonstrated the administration's resolve and perhaps dissuade further aggression by the Soviets in the region and elsewhere.

⁹⁰ For the Department of Agriculture statistics, see Robert L. Paarlberg, *Food, Trade, and Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 174-176.

⁹¹ See Paarlberg, *Food, Trade, and Foreign Policy*, 175; Vacs, *1980 Grain Embargo*, 5-6.

⁹² As cited in Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis*, 100.

In a nationally televised speech from the White House on the night of 4 January, Carter announced the full extent of U.S. countermeasures that would be applied to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Calling the invasion a “callous violation of international law,” Carter stated that no peace loving nation in the world could afford to continue doing “business as usual” with the Soviet Union or permit them to “commit this act with impunity.” The grain embargo—which effectively nullified the sale of seventeen million metric tons of grain headed for the Soviet Union—represented the most serious measure he announced.⁹³

This decision had a nearly immediate effect in Argentina. On 7 January 1980, the Argentine National Grain Board announced a temporary suspension of new export licenses for soybeans and grains until the situation had been clarified. The initial decision to suspend export licenses was an attempt to avoid a run on agricultural products until the junta reached a formal government conclusion on the embargo. The same day, Argentine Ambassador to the U.S., Aja Espil, was invited to the State Department for a meeting with Assistant Secretary of State for Interamerican Affairs, William Bowdler, and his Deputy Assistant Secretary, John Bushnell. During this meeting Argentina was first officially notified of the grain embargo, a full three days after Carter announced the measure.⁹⁴

Within the Argentine government, members of the junta including foreign minister General Carlos Pastor assumed a reasonably open posture towards the embargo. Pastor believed that adherence to the Carter administration’s proposed grain embargo better served Argentina if the U.S. was willing to make concessions in terms of its human rights concerns and also a

⁹³ As reported by Edward Walsh and Don Oberdorfer in “U.S. to Withhold Grain from Soviets,” *Washington Post*, 5 January 1980, sec. A, p. 1, 6.

⁹⁴ See Charles Krause, “Argentina Joins Other Nations in Suspending Grain Exports,” *Washington Post*, 8 January 1980, sec. A, p. 8; Vacs, *Discreet Partners*, 49.

retraction of the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment. Yet he was opposed by other members of the government, particularly Ambassador to the U. S. Aja Espil and Economic Minister Martinez de Hoz. Both argued against joining the embargo on the grounds that Argentina had not received prior consultation and had effectively been expected to cooperate under U.S. pressure. They also argued similar sanctions in the past had proved ineffective and unsuccessful, intervention in the grain market was contradictory to the current economic objectives and policies Argentina was pursuing, and the junta was only beginning the negotiating phase with the Soviets for the upcoming harvest. The internal influence both men garnered, particularly Martinez de Hoz, eventually persuaded the junta not to join the embargo.⁹⁵

On 10 January, the junta declared it did not support Carter's embargo on the Soviet Union. As the official communiqué stated:

We refuse to take part in punitive decisions or attitudes which were adopted without our prior participation or which are taken in centers of decision outside our country...A feature of Argentine foreign policy is not to use economic sanctions as a way to pressure or punish.⁹⁶

Until the announcement, the Carter administration firmly believed that Argentina would join in the embargo. In any case, if the junta refused to cooperate, senior U. S. officials had been assured that such a decision would not undermine the effectiveness of the embargo. Yet, as Brzezinski recalled, the administration was, within days, "shaken by Argentina's announcement that it would partially replace the American grain shipments."⁹⁷ An unnamed State Department

⁹⁵ Vacs, *1980 Grain Embargo*, 6.

⁹⁶ As cited in Charles A. Krause, "Argentina Rejects U.S. Proposal for Limiting Grain Sales to Soviets," *Washington Post*, 11 January 1980, sec. A, p. 20; see also "Passive Support for U.S. Grain Ban," *World News Digest*, 18 January 1980, p. 27.

⁹⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 431.

official declared that the administration “realized too late Argentina’s importance in the world grain market.”⁹⁸

Opposites Attract: Soviet-Argentine Relations

In order to better understand Argentina’s decision not to join the grain embargo, an analysis of Soviet-Argentine relations is necessary. While relations between Argentina and the U.S. deteriorated greatly in the three years prior to the embargo under the Carter administration, the relations between the junta and the Soviets grew in a climate of mutual understanding. Despite representing polar opposites in terms of political ideology, other factors figured prominently into the development of Soviet–Argentine relations. It is also apparent that the Soviets moved quickly to benefit from the downturn in relations between Argentina and the Carter administration.

When the military junta seized control in March 1976 they inherited an economy in disarray. The junta’s ability to combat terrorism effectively and completely to modernize the military apparatus was greatly dependent on their ability to revamp Argentina’s economic status. In order to achieve this objective, the junta rested its faith in economic Minister Jose Martinez de Hoz, who was also the only non-military member of the government. A widely respected economist, Martinez de Hoz employed an orthodox liberal economic strategy that sought to free market forces, with the exception of labor, and open the economy to both foreign investments and competition. Yet, two conditions needed to be met for his plan to enjoy widespread success:

⁹⁸ As cited by Krause, “Argentine Aid,” *Washington Post*, 25 January 1980, sec. A, p. 16.

(1) the curtailing of inflation by freezing wages and (2) improvising the payments balance by encouraging export volume and attracting foreign investment from abroad.

Thus, while locked in a fierce struggle with Marxist-inspired guerrillas, severing economic ties with socialist and communist countries was simply incompatible with Argentina's economic objectives. Therefore, the junta consistently refrained from publicly denouncing leftist countries, particularly the U.S.S.R. Likewise, the Argentine Communist party openly supported the junta in return for preferential treatment during the dirty war. Indeed, the Argentine Communist Party was one of the relatively few official parties the junta refrained from banning.⁹⁹

While U.S.–Argentine relations turned to open hostility over the Kennedy–Humphrey Amendment and the blocking of MDB loans, the Soviet Union quickly moved to capitalize on the decline between the two countries. In 1978 trading relations between Argentina and the USSR developed in a climate of mutual agreement. Export volume from Argentina grew by over fifty percent, resulting in a 174 million dollar increase in sales over the previous year. Economic relations between Argentina and the Soviet Union continued to grow in 1979. While Argentine exports amounted to \$455 million to the Soviet Union, the increase represented only seventy million dollars more than the previous year. Ironically, with concern to the grain embargo, the most significant drop in Argentine exports was in the grain market, particularly wheat that declined by 109,000 tons.¹⁰⁰

Another area in which the Soviet Union moved to take advantage of declining U.S.–Argentine relations was in the field of energy, particularly nuclear energy. During the late 1970s

⁹⁹ Juan de Onis, "4 Years after the Coup, Argentina is Regaining Favor," *New York Times*, 26 March 1980, sec. A, p. 2; Guest, *Behind the Disappearances*, 502.

¹⁰⁰ Vacs, *Discreet Partners*, 41-47.

and early 1980s, Argentina was the leading country in Latin America in terms of nuclear capabilities. It was the only country in Latin America boasting an operating nuclear power reactor, fuel fabrication facility, and a heavy water production facility. With vast amounts of uranium available, it was only logical that the Argentine government pursued a broader implementation of nuclear energy. The junta desired the enhancement of their nuclear capabilities into nuclear weaponry as part of their goal to modernize the military apparatus completely. Yet, the junta was hampered by a 1967 agreement signed during the Onganía regime legally obligating Argentina to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, commonly referred to as the Tlatelolco Treaty, originally promoted by the U.S. and the International Atomic Energy Agency with the objective of establishing a nuclear-weaponry-free zone in Latin America. In 1977, the junta was faced with the decision to resume their participation in the Tlatelolco Treaty and openly refused to do so.¹⁰¹

Perhaps the junta's decision not to resume cooperation in the Tlatelolco Treaty alone did not cause deep suspicion from the Carter administration. Yet, a second nuclear power plant was due to be completed in May 1981 by a Canadian firm. In addition, from 1977 to 1979 the junta was taking bids on the building of a third reactor using heavy water. Following the Allis Chalmers controversy, the junta awarded the contract for the third reactor to a West Germany company, accompanied with an agreement with a Swiss firm to build a heavy water production plant. Although Argentina produced as much as three tons of heavy water yearly, this amount was insufficient. The U.S. objected to the building of the heavy water plant because heavy water constituted sensitive technology that could be used as part of a fuel system leading to the

¹⁰¹ Estimates on the percentage of nuclear energy output vary from four to 8.1 percent. See, for example, *Latin American Weekly Report*, 15 February 1980, p. 205; John R. Redick, "The Tlatelolco Regime and Nonproliferation in Latin America," *International Organization* 35 (Winter 1981): 117-119.

production of plutonium and, possibly, atomic weaponry. Under pressure from the Carter administration, Germany refused to grant an export license to the German company contracted to construct the third heavy water reactor.¹⁰²

As early as August 1979, the Soviet Union had held high-level discussions with Argentine officials. On 24 August, a Soviet military delegation arrived at Ezeiza International Airport in Argentina, headed by Lieutenant general Ivan Brayko. Accompanied by two colonels from the Defense Ministry, Brayko conducted discussions with Viola and Videla during the three-day stay. Thereafter, Argentine officials visited Moscow in September 1979 and toured Soviet nuclear facilities.¹⁰³

At the same time, the Soviet Union consistently voted alongside Argentina in international forums. Although less important in terms of actual results, the Soviet voting alignment with Argentina garnered considerable admiration within the junta. Initial reports of human rights abuses in Argentina merited very little response from the Soviet Union. However, by 1977 it is evident that the Soviets were maneuvering to curtail condemnation of the junta's appalling human rights record. In March and August 1977, the Soviets provided the determining vote in keeping Argentina from being officially cited for gross human rights violations by the United Nation's human rights commission. This measure would have designated Argentina as a country to be investigated by the United Nations.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² See, Juan de Onis, "4 Years after the Coup, Argentina is Regaining Favor," *New York Times*, 26 March 1980, sec. A, p. 2; John R. Redick, "The Tlatelolco Regime and Nonproliferation in Latin America," 117-120.

¹⁰³ "Argentina to Russia with Love," *Latin America Political Report*, 21 September 1979, p. 293; "Argentine Military Delegation to the USSR," *British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts*, 7 September 1979, sec. V, p. 6213; "Soviet Military Delegation to Argentina," *British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts*, 24 August 1979, sec. SU, p. 6202; Juan de Onis, "4 Years After the Coup, Argentina is Regaining Favor," *New York Times*, 26 March 1980, sec. A, p. 2; John R. Redick, "The Tlatelolco Regime and Nonproliferation in Latin America," 117-120.

¹⁰⁴ Vacs, *Discreet Partners*, 74.

The United States voted against the junta on both occasions. The Soviet Union's continued support for Argentina served as a catalyst for further development of relations between both countries, while the voting of the U.S. only assisted in promoting hostilities in U.S.–Argentine relations. In a meeting in 1977, Argentine officials told American embassy representatives that they were highly impressed when the Soviets came to their aid and that “Argentina had been saved by the Soviet Union when the U.S.S.R. cast its vote in a three to two break on whether Argentina should be cited for its human rights violations.”¹⁰⁵

Following Carter's announcement of sanctions on 4 January, the Soviet Union quickly moved to break the grain embargo by pressuring the Argentine military. A high-level Soviet delegation sent to Argentine soon after Carter's address warned the junta “that if the Argentines did not sell grain...they would remove their technical and terminate their assistance and equipment.” Likewise, the Soviet's warned that nuclear cooperation and trade incentives would be ended in the result of Argentina's willingness to support such sanctions.¹⁰⁶

The grain embargo effectively offered Argentina the decision to join with the United States and continue the status quo relationship of hostility and alienation or to expand their cordial relationship with the Soviet Union. In retrospect, there was little decision to be made. A continued relationship of antagonism with no prospects for improvement with the former was easily offset by the potential economic gains that could be accomplished with the later. Essentially, the Carter administration offered the single greatest incentive for a burgeoning relationship between Argentina and the Soviet Union.

¹⁰⁵ Report from U.S. Embassy to Cyrus Vance entitled “Ambassador Todman's Meeting with Foreign Minister Allara,” *ADP*, 6 September 1977, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Memorandum from James Blystone to Ambassador Castro entitled “Meeting with Argentine Intelligence Officials,” *ADP*, 6 March 1980, p. 1-2.

Carter Rethinks

Having officially declared the grain embargo and subsequently realized that it was not effective without support from Argentina, the Carter administration was thrust into a rather difficult situation. Politically, the administration could not afford to suddenly withdraw its decision less than a month after declaring the embargo. Likewise, the embargo was useless without the backing of all major grain exporters in the Western hemisphere, particularly Argentina and Brazil. Theoretically, the combined grain output of both countries had the potential of replacing as much as fourteen million of the seventeen million metric tons the Carter administration banned.¹⁰⁷

Yet, because of their public stance during the preceding three years on human rights, the Carter administration did not have the flexibility to suddenly appear passive with Argentina on the human rights front. Still, better relations between the two countries were desperately needed if Argentina was to ever join in the embargo. Human rights, it should be noted, continued to be of primary concern in bilateral discussions. However, following the attempted grain embargo, the dynamics of the issue were changed drastically. Public condemnation of the junta no longer played a prominent role. Rather, quiet diplomacy behind the scenes was preferred.

Carter immediately tried to entice Argentina into attending a multilateral conference on the embargo in Washington. Customary diplomatic channels and contacts between the Argentine Foreign Ministry and the State Department were deemed useless, given the fact the Washington conference on the grain embargo was only two days away. A personal letter from Carter to Videla was quickly drafted in an attempt to persuade the junta to reconsider. In the

¹⁰⁷ Estimates varied on the potential output of the two countries. See, for instance, Charles Krause "Argentina, Brazil Ignoring Grain Ban," *Washington Post*, 14 January 1980, sec. A, p. 1.

letter, Carter stated that all countries could not afford to persist in having “business as usual with the Soviet Union” and that he held no doubts as to Argentina’s consideration of “measures in response to Soviet aggression.”¹⁰⁸

The letter did not have the desired effect. The following day, 12 January, the Argentine president of the National Grain Board declared that his country was still firm in their decision to sell grain to the Soviet Union and refused to actively participate in economic sanctions. Export representatives eventually reached a final agreement stating:

There is general agreement among the export representatives here that their governments would not directly or indirectly replace the grains that would have been shipped to the Soviet Union prior to the actions announced by President Carter.

Regarding this issue the public statement of the Government of Argentina is well-known. Nevertheless, in this meeting the Delegation of Argentina has stated that in no case does the government of Argentina intend to take trade advantages from the present international situation. Neither will it seek to alter artificially the current demands of the different markets.¹⁰⁹

As can be seen, the public statement issued was both convoluted and confusing, leading to any number of interpretations of the junta’s official policy. Some felt that the opening three sentences of the statement expressed Argentina’s willingness to support the embargo. Yet, this analysis was quickly dismissed when Argentine Agricultural Minister Jorge Zorreguieta stated publicly that his country’s position had been “erroneously interpreted” and Argentina did not intend “not participate in an embargo of grain to the Soviet Union. The final destination ...of our grain...will be determined by the market.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ As cited in Vacs, *1980 Grain Embargo*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ For a full text of the agreement between exporting countries see U.S. Congress, House, *Suspension of Grain Shipments to the Soviet Union*, 96th Cong., 2^d sess., 29 January 1980 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1980), 22-24.

¹¹⁰ As quoted in Charles A. Krauss, “Argentina, Brazil Ignoring Grain Ban,” *Washington Post*, 15 January 1980, sec. A, p. 1.

Immediately following the fallout resulting from Carter's grain embargo, American embassy officials Maxwell Chaplin and Anthony Freedman met privately with Colonel Carlos Cerda, the Argentine Sub-Secretary for Legal and Technical Matters to president Videla. Cerda offered several points concerning the status of US-Argentine relations. First, he expressed his country's "annoyance over the US penchant for dictating...and automatically expecting the Argentines to toe the line." Likewise, he noted that his country desired an explanation of how the U.S. truly viewed the government of Argentina. A desire for "high-level talks with the U.S." was expressed by Cerda, but it was desired that future discussions centered on major issues such as nuclear cooperation, "not merely human rights." Yet, the most significant portion of the discussion centered on the grain embargo. While Cerda stressed his country's anti-Soviet and anti-Marxist posture, he claimed that "if only President Carter had telephoned President Videla beforehand to enlist GOA support on grain restrictions the result would have been different."¹¹¹ Likewise, Martinez de Hoz, the primary economic policymaker in the Argentine government, stated that his reluctance to join the embargo essentially rested on the fact that Argentina had not been consulted prior to the announcement and had effectively been expected to follow the lead.¹¹²

Despite this, Carter sought to persuade the junta. At the end of January he sent a special team to Argentina headed by General Andrew Goodpaster, former supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and director of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The goal of Goodpaster's visit was to begin establishing better relations between the two countries and to promise the junta incentives in the event they decided to join in the embargo. In

¹¹¹ "US-Argentine Relations in the Light of the Soviet Aggression in Afghanistan and US request for Trade Restrictions Against the USSR," *ADP*, 17 January 1980, p. 1-2.

¹¹² Vacs, *1980 Grain Embargo*, 6.

an internal report prior to the Goodpaster visit, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bushnell noted the need for increased consultations with the junta. Suddenly, the pariah Argentina was being referred to as “an important and leading member of the Western system.” Bushnell noted that “General Goodpaster should make clear that our objective is not one of public censure,” and stressed the importance of enhancing “previously existing ties through visits, increased personnel exchanges, and consultations between the services.”¹¹³

Goodpaster arrived in Buenos Aires 24 January and his mission lasted until 27 January. During that time, Goodpaster, Ambassador Castro, and Claus Ruser, a specialist on Latin America from the State Department, conducted high-level discussions with Martinez de Hoz and General Videla. Argentine collaboration with the U.S. was asked on the grounds that the Soviet invasion represented a grave threat to world peace and stability. Argentine officials questioned this logic, asking “how does the Carter administration expect to get support from us, [when] it practically ostracized us during its first three years in office?”¹¹⁴

On 31 January, Videla held a news conference at the Casa Rosada with the purpose of explaining the discussions with Goodpaster. He noted that the United States had “offered many concessions” while Argentina had not conceded anything.¹¹⁵ Another spokesman for Argentina proclaimed that the Goodpaster’s visit illustrated the “extent to which the government of Argentina can turn the global rivalry between the two superpowers to its own advantage without

¹¹³ Briefing Memorandum from Bushnell to Vance entitled “Your Meeting with General Andrew Goodpaster, USA, January 22, 1980, at 3.00 P.M.” *ADP*, 22 January 1980, p. 2-3.

¹¹⁴ As quoted in James Nelson Goodsell, “Argentina: ‘no’ to Embargo,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 January 1980, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ As cited in a memorandum from the American Embassy to the State Department entitled “Videla Talks to Newspaper Editors about Goodpaster Visit,” *ADP*, 1 February 1980, p. 1.

abandoning its natural allies.” Despite this, the Argentine foreign ministry noted that significant progress in bilateral relations had been achieved during the visit.¹¹⁶

Meanwhile, U.S. officials were hastily reassessing American foreign policy towards Argentina. Internal reports filed soon after the grain embargo illustrate a desire to seriously alter the policies pursued during the previous three years. U.S. Ambassador Raul Castro’s policy assessment, written exactly one month after Carter’s public announcement of the grain embargo, stated:

Our present policies smack of coercion through denial. This pushes Argentina toward other suppliers, including the Soviet Union. Our new policies must be aimed toward rebuilding confidence, recognizing Argentina’s nuclear leadership in South America, complying with existing commitments for uranium exports and continuing with successful cooperation in the field of low enriched uranium fuels.

Toward this we must pursue high level, candid conversations expanded to the political level, beyond the narrow band of technical people who control Argentina’s program. Our public diplomacy must gain public understanding of issues involved.

With concerns to human rights, Castro noted that “there is little we can do to sway this, and our open insistence that the regime change this attitude adds an extraneous issue: that of outside pressure.” Public condemnation from U.S. officials on the situation of human rights could no longer be tolerated. Likewise, continued blocking of MDB and other international loans was self-defeating and only served to ostracize the junta further.¹¹⁷ At the same time, the Defense Department, the National Security Council staff, and the State Department’s Bureau of Inter-American Affairs all cited the grain embargo and the “Soviet connection” with Argentina as

¹¹⁶ As cited in Guest, *Behind the Disappearances*, 182.

¹¹⁷ See James Nelson Goodsell, “Argentina: ‘no’ to Embargo,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 January 1980, p. 3; See also, Jaun De Onis, “Argentines Expect Soviet to Buy Grain,” *New York Times*, 1 February 1980, sec. A, p. 1.

“demonstrating the need for the United States to improve strained relations with Argentina” and position itself to be able to exert more influence on the junta.¹¹⁸

The Goodpaster visit was soon followed by visits from Deputy Secretary of Commerce Luther Hodges in February and the former director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Gerard C. Smith, from 24 March to 26 March. Yet, relations between the two countries suffered greatly just prior to Smith’s visit. In February, U.S. and Argentine officials openly confronted one another in Geneva during a summit at the U.N. Human Rights Commission. Likewise, according to internal reports, an Argentine delegation was scheduled to visit Moscow during the Smith visit to further discussions on nuclear cooperation with the Soviets. This caused deep concern within the Carter administration because the U.S. had still failed to fulfill the 1978 commitment to supply Argentina with highly enriched uranium. In a draft report prepared for Smith prior to his visit, the State Department warned that “tensions with the U.S. tend to isolate Argentina; complicating the regime’s search for closer political contacts...and pushing it toward political as well as economic ties with the Soviet Union.”¹¹⁹

Like the Goodpaster visit, Gerard Smith’s trip failed to produce any sound results. In retrospect these high-level discussions were fraught from the outset. Although Goodpaster, Hodges, and Smith conveyed a forthcoming shift in the Carter administration’s policy towards Argentina, they were all handicapped by their inability to offer anything beyond optimistic rhetoric. Promising the junta an improvement in bilateral relations and expecting them to accept

¹¹⁸ John Goshko, “U.S., Concerned about Soviets, Seeks new Argentine Rapport,” *Washington Post*, 29 May 1980, sec. A, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ As noted in a State department scope paper on Smith visit given to Smith entitled “Ambassador Gerard C. Smith’s Visit to Argentina, March 24-26, 1980,” *ADP*, 20 March 1980; Cable from Vance to American Embassy, Buenos Aires, entitled “Smith Visit,” *ADP*, 3 March 1980; John Goshko, “U.S. Concerned About Soviets, Seeks new Argentine Rapport,” *Washington Post*, 29 May 1980; “Ambassador Smith’s Consultations with the Argentine Government: First Day’s Talk at Foreign Ministry (March 24),” *ADP*, 27 March 1980.

such claims in good faith without any specifics was, from the viewpoint of the Argentine military, a ludicrous proposition after three years of public brandishing from the administration.

What the administration lacked was substantial proof that a new policy on Argentina was in place and an exercising of this policy in the public arena. By mid-1980, Carter considered suspending the Kennedy–Humphrey Act, but the proposal was dropped in the face of fierce opposition from human rights advocates and members of the State Department. Thus, three years of restrictions effectively cemented Carter’s inability to offer practical concessions.¹²⁰

In order not to appear contradictory, the administration noted that much of the change towards Argentina was in response to the improved human rights situation. While the State Department’s report on human rights practices confirmed this notion, the sudden change in foreign policy was clearly not a byproduct of the situation on the ground, but by the junta’s newfound international relevance from the grain embargo and the apparent failure of three years of measures to punish the Argentine military.

On the last day of Gerard Smith’s visit, Juan de Onis of the *New York Times* reported that

The Carter Administration has begun a major revision of its policy towards Argentina. This country of 27 million bought \$2 billion worth of American goods last year, and is besides a major grain exporter and an emerging nuclear power, with the most advanced technology in Latin America.

The review began when evidence began to accumulate last year that Argentina’s military authorities were restraining the worst violence by the security forces and bringing the antiguerrilla campaign under centralized control. Fewer than 10 disappearances have been reported since last July.

The United States effort to improve relations quickened after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan ...

¹²⁰Edward Walsh, “Reagan Seeking to Permit Aid to Argentines,” *Washington Post*, 15 March 1981, sec. A, p. 1.

The independent Argentine foreign policy is presented by the military here as an achievement growing out of internal order and economic strength.¹²¹

Amidst the prospects of a change in foreign policy towards Argentina, Patricia Derian threatened to resign and went public, telling the *New York Times* “there is about to be a major policy shift on Argentina; a move to normalize relations and to end our official criticism of the regime.” The situation of human rights in Argentina had become the single greatest issue to defining her tenure as Assistant Secretary of State. From Derian’s viewpoint, any policy shift undermined her attempts at enhancing human rights in Argentina over the previous three years. “It is probably too late now for them to back down now,” proclaimed Derian. “If they don’t I’m leaving, and I won’t say it’s for ‘personal reasons.’”¹²² Opposing Derian, were officials such as Raul Castro, the American Ambassador to Argentina. Castro openly suggested that such changes were not only desired but necessary, as cited in his policy assessment following the grain embargo negotiations. In July 1980, he told reporters “we keep asking Argentina to do things for us, but we don’t offer anything in return.”¹²³

Despite the considerable discussions concerning a foreign policy change by the administration, proof of such modifications never materialized, aside from the administrations refraining from open condemnation of the junta. When Carter failed to win reelection in 1980 the issue was effectively muted for the time being, alleviating Carter from an inevitable shift in foreign policy towards Argentina and a potential internal battle within his administration.

¹²¹ Juan de Onis, “4 Years After the Coup, Argentina is Regaining Favor,” *New York Times*, 26 March 1980, sec. A, p. 3.

¹²² Ann Crittenden, “Human Rights and Mrs. Derian,” *New York Times*, 31 May 1980, sec. A, p. 16. See also, John Goshko, “U.S. Concerned about Soviets, Seeks new Argentine Rapport,” *Washington Post*, 29 May 1980, sec. A, p. 6.

¹²³ Juan de Onis, “Soviet-Argentine Grain Deal: How did it Happen?” *New York Times*, 17 July 1980, sec. A, p. 7.

In retrospect, it is doubtful that any concessions the administration offered would offset Argentina's decision, considering the grain embargo presented the single greatest economic opportunity the junta had encountered in their tenure. Service on the country's foreign debt had reached somber proportions while grain sales to the Soviet Union had become the only supply of hard currency. By 1980, Argentine exports to the Soviet Union represented thirty-six times the value of its imports. Likewise, the grain embargo prompted Argentina to reduce customary exports to other traditional trade partners such as Spain, Japan, Italy, Peru, and Chile in order to service Moscow's needs. This alone allowed Argentina to quadruple its sales to Moscow in 1980 alone.¹²⁴

Likewise, the junta's decision was made as much in an attempt to slight the administration as it was out of economic necessity. While Argentina most likely would not have joined the embargo either way due to economic necessity, it is doubtful that it would have cut exports to all traditional trade partners in order to replace as much of the lost grain the Soviets needed if the Carter administration had not, from the junta's viewpoint, openly provoked and alienated the Argentine military. An alliance with the Soviets was certainly not what the junta desired having presented itself as a supporter of the Western world.

At the same time, relations between the junta and the Soviets had flourished to such an extent that Argentina did not have the convenience of being able to turn its back on one of the only countries that it had maintained strong economic and nuclear ties with and continually supported it in international forums. Without this added dimension of strong Soviet-Argentine relations, the junta may very-well have been inclined to join the embargo regardless of the

¹²⁴ See Congress, House, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, *U.S. Policy toward Argentina*, 98th Cong. 1st sess., 16 March, 1983), 9; Falcoff, *Two Policies*, 22-24; Guest, *Behind the Disappearances*, 182.

present status of the relationship with the United States. In retrospect, it is clear that, coupled together, both factors left the junta with little choice.

By the time Ronald Reagan took office in January 1981, the issue of the grain embargo and relations with Argentina had conveniently been forced into the arena of partisan politics. Likewise, America's foreign policy shift towards Argentina during the Reagan administration was not only a result of his election in 1980. If anything, the grain embargo marked the turning point for both Carter and Reagan, and for Congress as a whole. While much of Carter's foreign policy towards Argentina was well intended and, for the most part, constructive, the embargo clearly signaled the need for an alternative foreign policy towards the junta which, until the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, had been targeted with harsher measures than any other fascist or communist government in the world. Likewise, by 1981 it had become abundantly clear that such policies were counterproductive and endangered American relations with one of the strongest economic and military countries in Latin America.

CHAPTER 4

REVISION, REALISM, AND REAGAN

The U.S. presidential election of 1980 garnered considerable attention from the people of Buenos Aires. Early in his campaign, Ronald Reagan openly criticized the significance human rights had attained in shaping the foreign policies of the Carter administration. The vast majority of human rights violations during the dirty war occurred during the same period Carter had employed numerous sanctions in the attempt to curtail such violations. Thus, by 1981 both the Reagan administration and the majority of members of Congress viewed conciliation with the junta as the preferred instrument for improved bilateral relations, regardless of the current human rights situation in Argentina.

At the same time, the grain embargo of 1980 signaled to many in Washington that a change in foreign policy towards Argentina was seriously needed, particularly considering the country's newfound significance internationally. Early in his presidential campaign, Reagan had condemned the grain embargo Carter imposed, stating that neither "Pigs, cows, [n]or chickens" had invaded Afghanistan and "no one segment of the economy should be asked to bear the brunt of American countermeasures."¹²⁵ Yet, with concerns about Argentina's refusal to join the embargo, there was little Reagan could do. The junta signed a five-year agreement with the Soviets in July 1980 to provide them with at least 4.5 million tons of grain annually. By the time Reagan began his presidency in January 1981, the Soviet Union accounted for thirty-five percent of Argentina's total exports with over eighty percent of Argentina's grain going to Moscow. Therefore, Reagan administration attempted to establish better relations with the junta in the

¹²⁵ As quoted in Jordan, *Crisis*, 101.

hope that Argentina would once again choose to sell grain to traditional partners, such as Italy and China, rather than the Soviets. Despite the Soviet–Argentine grain agreement for 4.5 million tons, the junta sold the Soviets just over eleven million metric tons between 1980 and 1981. Thus, the Reagan administration hoped to persuade the junta to divert the remaining 6.5 million tons back to its traditional partners and provide a basis for continuing the grain embargo.¹²⁶

Yet, there were other reasons that reinforced the notion for altering the U.S. approach. For example, the State Department’s human rights report for 1980, released in early 1981, clearly showed significant progress concerning the human rights situation in Argentina. A change in the structure of the junta was also expected, with Videla, the president of the junta, scheduled to resign officially in 1981. Fortunately for the U.S., his chosen successor, General Roberto Viola, was widely considered a moderate within the Argentine military who openly supported the establishment of a new dialogue with the Reagan administration and endorsed a return to democracy in Argentina.¹²⁷

The Soviet military influence and burgeoning relationship with Argentina had also become a pressing concern in Washington. Only four days before Reagan took office, Argentina purchased five tons of heavy water from the Soviet Union for the Atucha I nuclear plant. Particularly distressing was the fact that the junta chose to buy from the Soviets because the Carter administration failed to uphold an agreement to supply the heavy water. By the spring of 1981, the Argentine Air Force publicly stated a desire to replace its aging American A-4 fighter

¹²⁶ For the trade status of Argentina and the Soviet Union in 1980-81, see Joseph S. Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States: A Conflicted Relationship* (Boston: Twayne’s International Publications, 1990), p. 235-236, and “Authoritarian Regimes and Foreign Policy: The Case of Argentina,” in *Latin American Nations in World Politics*, ed. Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph S. Tulchin (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), *passim*; Vacs, *1980 Grain Embargo*, 12.

¹²⁷ For information on Viola, see “Argentina: Viola and Reagan Test the Waters,” *Latin American Commodities Report*, 20 March 1981, sec. WR-81-12, p.3.

planes with Soviet SU-22's. As one report from the *New York Times* noted, the "Argentines would prefer to fly new American planes, but their availability depends on whether the Reagan Administration" decided to lift the Kennedy–Humphrey Amendment banning arms sales.¹²⁸ With a trade imbalance weighing heavily in Argentina's favor by a ratio of thirty-six to one, the prospects for an exchange of military equipment between Argentina and the Soviets was widely understood within the Reagan administration to be in the works.¹²⁹

Yet Reagan was thrust into a precarious situation on how best to approach the Argentine situation. From the viewpoint of the Reagan administration, some change in policy was required, considering a continuation of the policies employed by the Carter administration assured that bilateral relations would never progress. Yet, if the Reagan administration appeared conciliatory to the junta, they would be open to charges of condoning human rights abuses and candidly attempting to perpetuate the same military apparatus that facilitated such violations. Yesterday's opposition now determined policy outcomes, while the preceding administration conveniently condemned such policies as ineffective and regressive. The questions raised as to the effectiveness of Carter's policies during his final year in office quickly became mired in the political morass of competing ideologies and political exultation.

Clearly the Reagan administration brought with it a strictly counter-revisionist foreign policy. Reminiscent of the foreign policies the U.S. pursued in the 1950s, the new administration simplified the context of the Cold War, rendering friend and foe alike easily

¹²⁸ As quoted in Edward Schumacher, "Argentina and Soviets are no Longer just Business Partners," *New York Times*, 12 July 1981, sec. D, p. 4.

¹²⁹ Concern over Soviet-Argentine relations is well covered by Angus Deming and Larry Rohter in "Argentines: Let's be Friends Again," *Newsweek*, 1 June 1981, p. 58. See also, Edward Schumacher, "Argentina and Soviets are no Longer just Business Partners," *New York Times*, 12 July 1981, sec. D, p. 4. For the purchase of heavy water by Argentina, see "Soviet Heavy Water for Argentina," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 15 January 1981, sec. 5, p. 6623.

identifiable. The moral superiority pursued by the Carter administration quickly gave way to a foreign policy of East versus West, based largely on perceived threats to national security interests of the U.S. from communist states. The Cold War had officially resumed at full swing, and the new policy called for the “Brezhnev doctrine” to be met full force by the “Reagan doctrine.” With an agenda based on a foreign policy of “cold war internationalism,” Reagan was committed to reestablishing the global military preeminence of the U.S. while offsetting and challenging Soviet strategic expansionism in the Third World.¹³⁰ Unlike his predecessor, Reagan’s foreign policy was completely devoid of human rights interests. With a political philosophy based on the assumption that anti-Americanism equated to actual communism, the new administration believed that all global conflicts and threats to the national security interests of the U.S. were the direct result of external factors, most often attributed to the Soviet Union.¹³¹

Much of the foreign policy the Reagan administration adopted was molded by the ideas of Jeane Kirkpatrick, the president’s permanent representative to the United Nations, who, in 1979 offered the definitive indictment of Carter’s foreign policy in the now infamous essay, “Dictatorships and Double Standards.”¹³² The fact that Kirkpatrick, a former Marxist and longtime Democrat, was able to transform her ideas into the bedrock of a Republican president’s foreign policy was quite remarkable. Kirkpatrick represented one of the earliest examples of the emerging “neoconservative” movement of the 1970s. Disillusioned by the foreign policies of the

¹³⁰ Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy towards Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 13-14.

¹³¹ Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997), 48; Cynthia Arnson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America 1976-1993* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 54-56; John Renelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 704-705.

¹³² Jeane Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” *Commentary* 68 (November 1979): 34-45.

post-Vietnam Democratic Party—represented by the likes of George McGovern and Jimmy Carter—this new breed of conservatives subscribed to the liberal position Democrats took on domestic issues but were particularly hawkish with regards to American foreign policy.

In “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” the 1979 *Commentary* essay that first brought her to the attention of Ronald Reagan, Kirkpatrick offered a scathing review of the Carter administration’s foreign policies. The essay was essentially a critical examination of two particular cases—Nicaragua and Iran—in which she argued that the Carter administration purposefully undermined two authoritarian regimes that represented traditional allies of the United States. According to Kirkpatrick, Carter’s policies served to both undermine the governments of the Shah in Iran and Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua while simultaneously bolstering the “coming to power of new regimes in which ordinary people enjoy[ed] fewer freedoms and less personal security than under the previous autocracy—regimes, moreover, hostile to American interests and policies.” Thus, according to Kirkpatrick, these policies effectively paved the way for the advent of a radical Islamic state in Iran and communism in Nicaragua.¹³³

Furthermore, Kirkpatrick argued that authoritarian dictatorships were not static, while totalitarian regimes tended to be permanent. Likewise, she asserted that most Third World countries were not economically, socially, culturally, or politically prepared for democracy and the United States should not, therefore, necessarily view liberal or progressive forces within these countries as being capable to bringing about positive changes. There is no example, she

¹³³ Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” 35. It should be noted that Kirkpatrick’s arguments were not new, but borrowed heavily from classics of the 1940s and 1950s such as Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960) and Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, Harcourt, Brace 1951). Yet, with the trauma experienced by the American public following Vietnam, these ideas appeared novel as Kirkpatrick applied what was previously only theoretical to a practical foreign-policy issue.

wrote, of a “revolutionary ‘socialist’ or communist society being democratized,” while right-wing “autocracies do sometimes evolve into democracies—given time, propitious economic, social, and political circumstances, talented leaders, and a strong indigenous demand for representative government.” Yet, U.S. policy could be used effectively to “encourage this process of liberalization and democratization, provided that the effort is not made at a time when the incumbent government is fighting for its life against violent adversaries,” as was the case in Argentina until 1979. For Kirkpatrick, all proposed reforms should be “aimed at producing gradual change rather than perfect democracy overnight.” Therefore, the role of U.S. foreign policy towards these countries should be to “understand the process of change, and then...to align ourselves with history, hoping to contribute a bit of stability along the way.”¹³⁴

While Kirkpatrick’s essay failed to cite a single reference to the situation in Argentina, she was, nevertheless, widely considered to be an authority on the country’s authoritarian record, having already written a book on Peronist Argentina. Thus, Kirkpatrick’s analysis of a gradual turn towards stable democracy was seen as being applicable to the Argentine situation. While the country had never demonstrated a great affinity for democracy, there were many opportunities for gradual transfer from military to civilian control, such as military governments calling for open elections in 1932, 1946, 1958, 1963, and 1973.¹³⁵

Alexander Haig, the administration’s new Secretary of State, stated:

We told Argentina that it had heard its last public lecture from the United States on human rights. The practice of publicly denouncing friends on questions of human rights while minimizing the abuse of those rights in the Soviet Union and other totalitarian countries was at an end. The U.S.

¹³⁴ Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” 37, 40.

¹³⁵ It should be noted that, although elections were held, the victory of a candidate unacceptable to the military was a virtual certainty during the elections of 1958 and 1973. See Falcoff, *Tale of Two Policies*, 38. For Jeane Kirkpatrick’s work on Peronist Argentina, see *Leader and Vanguard in Mass Society: A Study of Peronist Argentina* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1971).

decided to vote for Argentina in the U.N. Human Rights Commission. We knew that the Europeans would likely not vote with us and that there would be unfavorable press reaction, but Argentina had dramatically improved its record, and, in our judgment, further improvement was more likely to be achieved by recognition of that fact than by reducing one of the most important nations in the hemisphere to the status of pariah.¹³⁶

As much as Patricia Derian's influence on the Carter administration brought the issue of human rights to the forefront of American foreign policy towards Argentina, Jeane Kirkpatrick was as much responsible for at least successfully removing the subject from the Reagan administration's public stance. In December 1980, Derian and Kirkpatrick, the two most important individuals responsible for shaping American foreign policy towards Argentina during the dirty war, faced off in a heated and memorable interview on CBS. The calm and measured Kirkpatrick stated:

If we are confronted with the choice between offering assistance to a moderately repressive autocratic government which is also friendly to the United States, and permitting it to be over-run by a Cuban-trained, Cuban-armed, Cuban-sponsored insurgency we would assist the moderate autocracy.

Perhaps owing to the sting of electoral defeat and the security of policy change reflected in Kirkpatrick's remarks, Derian's response was more than usually confrontational:

What the hell is moderately repressive—that you only torture half the people, and that you only do summary executions now and then?

The exchange offered a perfect example of the disparity in foreign policies the two administrations pursued.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Alexander M. Haig, *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), 90.

¹³⁷ The exchange was cited by Philip Geyelin in his article "Human Rights Turnaround," *Washington Post*, 12 December 1980, Op-Ed, p. A23.

The Argentine-American Alliance

From the outset, the Reagan administration identified three distinct areas of concern in the Western Hemisphere: first, to secure Central America as a safe area for U.S. national security interests by thwarting the spread of communism; second, to improve relations with the Mexican government; and third, to reestablish a productive relationship with countries in South America, particularly Chile and Argentina. With its strict anti-communist stance, the Argentine military later figured prominently into helping the administration achieve its objectives in Central America, particularly in Nicaragua and El Salvador.¹³⁸

In the later part of 1980, officials from the Argentine military held a number of informal discussions with some of Reagan's top Latin American advisors. These negotiations centered on the formulation of a new partnership between Argentina and the U.S. in the event of a Republican victory in the upcoming November elections. Thus, it was of little surprise when Reagan completely abandoned Carter's policy of pressuring the junta and chose to move towards an alliance with Argentina focused on the curtailment of communism in Latin America.¹³⁹

The earliest move by the Reagan administration to improve relations with Argentina came in March 1981, when junta president designate Roberto Viola was invited for a visit to the U.S. During his stay from 15-19 March, Viola met with Reagan, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, and a number of members of Congress. With the exception of the Beagle Channel dispute with Chile, all bilateral issues were discussed, including nuclear proliferation, the grain embargo, and the possibility of Reagan asking Congress to repeal

¹³⁸ Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 52.

¹³⁹ Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 63.

the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment banning military aid and spare parts. Reagan made it clear that he was willing to make use of a loophole in the amendment and suspend sanctions in the interest of national security. In an informal meeting with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Viola pledged to make more of an effort to identify some of the six thousand reported disappearances. Likewise, Senator Charles Percy of Illinois pressed Viola to back up its condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by joining in the grain embargo.¹⁴⁰

By all accounts, the visit was a great success both for Viola, who bolstered his status domestically, and for the Reagan administration, which viewed the trip as a successful beginning towards developing improved bilateral relations. As Viola stated after the trip, “I have encountered an understanding that exceeded my most exaggerated hopes.” “The United States government,” proclaimed Foreign Minister Oscar Camilion, after meeting with Kirkpatrick for nearly six hours, “has made a decision to make progress in its relations with Argentina in the most harmonious way possible.”¹⁴¹

The Reagan administration moved quickly to bring about results in an attempt to display the new course bilateral relations would follow with Argentina. On 18 March, while Viola was still making his unofficial trip in the U.S., Deputy White House Press Secretary Larry Speakes told reporters that Reagan was considering a request to Congress to repeal the embargo on military aid to Argentina. Testifying before Congress the same day, Secretary of State Haig also

¹⁴⁰ “Argentina: Viola and Reagan Test the Waters,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, 20 March 1981, p. 63; Steven R. Weisman, “U.S. May End Embargo on Argentine Military Aid,” *New York Times*, 18 March 1981, sec. A, p. 1; “Warming Up to Argentina,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 March 1981, p. 24; Telegram from Harry Schlaudeman to U.S. Embassy, Buenos Aires, entitled “President-Designate Viola’s Visit to the US-Assessment,” *ADP*, 24 March 1981.; Telegram from Secretary of State Haig to U.S. Embassy, Buenos Aires, entitled “Private Visit of Argentine President-Designate Viola,” *ADP*, 20 March 1981; Cable from Haig to U.S. Embassy, Buenos Aires, entitled “Press Guidance for Viola Visit,” *ADP*, 18 March 1981, p.1.

¹⁴¹ Both Viola and Camilion’s statements are cited in Mark Falcoff, *Tale of Two Policies*, 45.

confirmed that the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment banning military aid was being reviewed. “We are looking at the situation,” said Haig, “with respect to the provision of armaments to Argentina now, but there has been no decision.”¹⁴²

Immediately following the announcement, Senator Kennedy, co-author of the bill that banned military aid, went on the offensive. On 19 March, Kennedy wrote Richard Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, expressing his concern over the human rights situation in Argentina and the Reagan administration’s consideration of repealing the arms embargo. Likewise, the same human rights advocates came forward against the Reagan administration who had previously opposed Carter’s proposal to lift the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment following the grain embargo. Eventually, Carter had succumbed to the pressure. Yet the Reagan administration was not so easily compelled. In response to Kennedy’s letter, Fairbanks offered the excuse most often elicited by the Reagan administration for any change in policy:

We have decided to repeal of section 620B of the Foreign Assistance Act [the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment]. By imposing blanket restrictions on the sale of military supplies and training to Argentina, this legislation inhibits the accomplishment of our strategic objectives in the hemisphere while not permitting recognition of the considerable progress Argentina has made toward the restoration of due process and rule of law.¹⁴³

In April, a joint hearing by the Subcommittees on Human Rights and International Organizations and Inter-American Affairs of the House Foreign Affairs Committee was called to discuss the President’s recommendation to repeal the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment on arms

¹⁴² Quoted in Steven Weisman, “U.S. May End Embargo on Argentine Military Aid,” *New York Times*, 18 March 1981, sec. A, p. 1.

¹⁴³ Letter from Richard Fairbanks to Senator Kennedy entitled “Human Rights in Argentina,” *ADP*, 31 March 1981. See also, Edward Walsh, “Reagan Seeking to Permit Aid to Argentine Forces,” *Washington Post*, 15 March 1981, sec. A, p. 1.

sales and military training. Another meeting was assembled by the International Development Institutions and Finance subcommittee of the House Committees on Banking, Financing, and Urban Affairs, to debate the Reagan administration's decision to cease the blocking of MDB loans to Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina.

During the April hearings on military aid, the consideration of whether the human rights status in Argentina had displayed sufficient improvement to merit a suspension of the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment quickly dissipated into the realm of partisan politics. The entire session was devoted to a discussion focusing on the morality and expediency of the administration's policy towards Argentina, while ignoring the question of whether progress had been made while. Much of the debate centered on whether it was suitable for Congress to take tangible notice of the improved situation and, based upon this, if future progress could be expected by lifting the sanctions on the junta.

Two witnesses spoke in support of the administration's proposals, former congressman James Karth, a registered foreign agent of the Argentine government, and James Theberge, one of the more prominent economic consultants available with diplomatic experience and a former U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua. From the outset of their testimonies, both men clearly desired to shift the members' attention to more pertinent issues such as the ineffectiveness of the arms embargo, the current rather than former status of human rights in Argentina, the loss of foreign sales and domestic jobs, and the pressing need to allow the administration a broader flexibility in foreign affairs.

Karth, the first administration witness to speak, opened by stating a recent State Department report citing "an equally marked deterioration of human rights in the occupied West Bank, the Soviet Union, Cuba, South Korea, South Africa, and...Northern Ireland." Despite this

report, Karth noted that he knew of “no sitting member of Congress,” who was contemplating any sanctions “similar to 620B...for these countries.” Karth continued to berate the policies currently in place, arguing that Argentina had systematically been singled out in order to be made an example and “had penalties imposed on it that...[were] far more severe than those imposed upon North Korea, China, North Vietnam, and a host of other nations.” Finally Karth claimed that an ongoing loss of American jobs, America’s status in Latin America, and political leverage in Argentina, were the only results to be expected from the continued ostracizing of the junta.¹⁴⁴

Following Karth, James Theberge offered four primary reasons to justify repealing the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment: first, the clear reduction in human rights violations that he deemed “dramatic” since 1979; second, the sanction had been ineffective in inducing the Argentine government to improve the status of human rights; third, the amendment had failed in its objective of denying arms to the junta and, to the contrary, promoted arms production capabilities and Argentine alliances with other nations, most distressingly the Soviet Union; and finally, it was counterproductive and had directly discouraged Argentina’s cooperation in the grain embargo.¹⁴⁵

Patricia Feeny of Amnesty International, Orville Schell of the Lawyer’s Committee on Human Rights, and Joseph Eldridge of the Washington Office on Latin America spoke in opposition to Karth and Theberge. Collectively, they argued that the continuing issue of disappearances, the large number of citizens being imprisoned without trial, and the junta’s

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in *Review of United States Policy on Military Assistance to Argentina, Hearing Before the Subcommittees on Human Rights and International Organizations and on Inter-American Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh Congress, 1st Session, April 1981* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 16-21.

¹⁴⁵ Theberge’s comments can be found in *Review of United States Policy to Argentina*, 45-51.

continued refusal to account for missing persons as reasons not to rescind any current sanctions. To bolster the argument against rescinding the sanction, Eldridge claimed that “every major improvement in the human rights situation in Argentina can be traced to some form of international pressure.”¹⁴⁶

Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick of New Jersey argued that the Kennedy–Humphrey Amendment was not a matter of foreign aid but a question of military and commercial sales. “Whatever went to Argentina would be paid for,” she noted; “to refer to it as aid perhaps gives a false impression.” Although Fenwick felt that a change in policy under a new administration would be misinterpreted in Argentina—and that the Soviet Union expressed concern over the continued ostracizing of the junta, which, she asserted, would continue to push them into the hands of the Soviets—she felt that a change in policy under a new administration would be misinterpreted in Argentina and the Soviet Union. “If Mr. Reagan had been President when this embargo was imposed...then it would be clear that the change was being made because of the changes in Argentina.”¹⁴⁷

Yet, what was most surprising about the discussions was the emphasis on the grain embargo, which dominated the debate. In fact, the grain embargo and Argentina’s relationship with the Soviet Union was mentioned more by congressional members than the Kennedy–Humphrey Amendment they were deliberating. As Congressman Pete Peyser of New York noted “Argentina’s recent rapprochement with the Soviet Union...is due to our policies.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ See Eldridge’s comments in *Review of United States Policy to Argentina*, 118-119.

¹⁴⁷ See Fenwick’s comments in *Review of United States Policy to Argentina*, 15.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in *Review of United States Policy to Argentina*, 9.

While the dialogue was intended to focus on U.S. sanctions, the only figures presented by Congressional members were several tables illustrating Argentine grain exports to the Soviet Union. Thus, it is apparent that the grain embargo became the single issue on which the Kennedy–Humphrey Amendment rested. As Congressman Robert Lagomarsino of California stated:

While I...view that we should try to have an effective [grain] embargo, whether it is one or any other one that we might try to install in the future, I think we might have a...better...chance of doing that if we are at least talking to the countries we are asking for cooperation. If we have on our books legislation that treats them worse than the country we are trying to embargo...it is very difficult to explain to them why they should go along with us when we have not been going along with them, even to the extent of allowing commercial sales.¹⁴⁹

Amidst the flurry of partisan politics over the Kennedy–Humphrey Amendment, Reagan compromised and replaced the bill with another law, Section 725 of the International Security and Development Cooperation Act, effectively permitting a resumption of military training for Argentine and Chilean forces and allowing the sale of military and commercial arms to the junta when and if the president certified that significant improvement of human rights had occurred. In political terms, the Argentine issue was a great loss domestically for the new administration because it opened up opposition from former Carter administration officials who quickly condemned the policy as one that gave both money and arms to torturers. While Reagan did not officially certify sales to Argentina until the return to civilian rule under Raul Alfonsin in early 1984, the replacement of the Kennedy–Humphrey Amendment was symbolically significant in terms of the administration’s desire to improve relations with the junta.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in *Review of United States Policy to Argentina*, 11.

¹⁵⁰ Falcoff, *Tale of Two Policies*, 34-35.

With domestic pressure mounting to the grain embargo and the administration's inability to coerce Argentina to cut grain supplies to the Soviet Union, Reagan decided to end the embargo on 21 April 1981. Three days later he announced that, although still opposed to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and elsewhere, the U.S. was lifting the embargo on all agricultural commodities including grain. Reagan explained his decision to lift the embargo in July 1982, stating:

In the spring of 1981, I lifted the grain embargo imposed by the previous administration because it was not having the desired effect of seriously penalizing the Soviet Union...[Increased sales by other suppliers] substantially undercut the tremendous sacrifices of our farmers, and I vowed at the time not to impose a grain embargo unilaterally unless it was part of a general cutoff of trade between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.¹⁵¹

Another area that the Reagan administration used to improve relations was in supporting Multinational Development Bank loans. Similar to the policies pursued by Carter during the last year of his presidency, the Reagan administration consistently voted in favor of loans to Argentina. Once again, the new administration justified these actions on the grounds that there had been consistent human rights improvements and that such progress should be recognized. As an internal document stated, the administration felt that "more will be gained for human rights by recognizing improvements than by the continued public condemnation implicit in negative votes or abstentions on MDB loans."¹⁵²

Central America, primarily Nicaragua and El Salvador, was, along with Afghanistan, viewed within the Reagan administration as a significant area in redefining the role of the United

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Vacs, *1980 Grain Embargo*, 12-13; Congressional Research Service, *An Assessment of the Afghanistan Sanctions: Implications for Trade and Diplomacy in the 1980s*, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 97th Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1981), 39-45.

¹⁵² Document entitled "U.S. Vote in MDBs (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay)," *ADP*, 13 July 1981, p.3.

States as a world power. Amidst the new Argentine-American alliance, the junta effectively played the role of surrogate to the U.S. in Central America. The reason behind Argentina's involvement in Central America can be attributed to a wide number of constraints on direct U.S. involvement. First, with few agency specialists available for covert action, the CIA was restricted in its capacity. Second, the CIA was especially susceptible to congressional scrutiny. Most importantly, Congress displayed an open disdain for any direct intervention that could result in an open war in Central America, much like what had recently occurred in Vietnam.

In Nicaragua, the CIA was instructed to promote a counterrevolutionary army to combat communist expansion under the direct guidance of Argentine military advisors. Thus, promoting an indigenous army trained by another country provided an effective solution. Likewise, the groundwork activities of the Contras, the counter-revolutionary army opposing the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, were directed by Argentine military advisors while foreign aid was easily concealed through assistance monies for Argentina. By early 1982, the Reagan administration had begun formal discussions with the junta, as well as Columbia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile, about the formation of a combined force to be used in the establishment of a military blockade of Nicaragua and to counteract guerrillas in El Salvador. Yet, Argentina's invasion of the Falklands in April 1982 effectively ended the alliance with the U.S. in Central America.¹⁵³

The Malvinas

Aside from the grain embargo, perhaps the greatest shift in bilateral relations occurred on 11 December 1981. Viola, recovering from a minor heart attack, was abruptly replaced by army

¹⁵³ For an authoritative and detailed look at the Argentine-American alliance in Central America, see Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America*, 57-71.

commander Leopoldo Galtieri in a palace coup. Unlike Viola, Galtieri had lived in the U.S. as a student officer. A staunch anti-communist, he had visited Washington twice in the preceding six months. Only weeks before becoming president, Galtieri had visited the U.S. and met with a number of high ranking administration officials, promising that Argentina was prepared to contribute troops to Central America. Galtieri certainly felt he had forged a special relationship with the Reagan administration, a fact that many attribute to his decision to embark on the ill-fated military escapade in the Falkland Islands.¹⁵⁴

Viola's replacement had grave implications in terms of bilateral relations. Only four months after taking control, an Argentine expeditionary force invaded the Falkland Islands, known in Argentina as the Malvinas, located eight hundred miles from Antarctica and having a population of around eighteen hundred people and five hundred thousand sheep. Coupled with the fact that there is snowfall on the islands approximately eight months out of the year and an undeveloped infrastructure, the Falklands appeared to be an area of little interest to most countries. Yet, the battle between Argentina and Great Britain over control of the Falklands stemmed back to 1833 when Argentina claimed Britain took control of the islands illegally. Argentina never relinquished its claim to the islands and even revived them in 1910 and in 1927. Negotiations between the two countries began in 1966 and lagged until 1980 with few results.¹⁵⁵

Galtieri's decision to invade the Falklands derived from the belief that Britain was not willing to risk war over a group of islands that had virtually no intrinsic value to anyone. He concluded that Britain was not prepared to fight a war over eight thousand miles from home.

¹⁵⁴ David Lewis Feldman, "The United States Role in the Malvinas Crisis, 1982: Misguidance and Misperception in Argentina's Decision to Go to War," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27 (Summer 1985): 1-22; Falcoff, *Tale of Two Policies*, 47-48.

¹⁵⁵ Martin Edwin Andersen, *Dossier Secreto*, 12; Max Hastings and Simone Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1984), 13

Likewise, Galtieri anticipated that Argentina's assistance in Central America, its newfound international significance following the grain embargo, and the Reagan administration's attempts to reestablish strong bilateral relations were enough to force the U.S. to remain neutral during the conflict. David Feldman argues that Galtieri's decision was further "bolstered by the high praise he had received from U.S. officials in Washington...and by the presence of numerous officials who honored him during his stay." Confident of success, Galtieri ordered the invasion on 2 April 1982.¹⁵⁶

From the outset of the war, the Reagan administration tried frantically to stop any conflict. The night of the invasion Reagan spent over an hour desperately trying to compel Galtieri to call off the invasion. Only four days later, Reagan dispatched Haig on a diplomatic odyssey moving between London, Washington, and Buenos Aires. When these attempts failed, the Reagan administration announced on 30 April that it planned to withhold certification of Argentine military sales, block EXIM Bank credits and guarantees, and deter loans from the Commodity Credit Corporation. Ironically, starting from vastly differing ideologies and beliefs, both the Carter and Reagan administrations ended with nearly identical foreign policies towards Argentina.¹⁵⁷

Only two months after the outbreak of war Galtieri announced Argentina's surrender to the British. Two days later, on 17 June, he resigned as president. The junta was officially replaced by a provisional government that pledged to hold elections. Argentina's dirty war was over.

¹⁵⁶ Feldman, "The United States Role in the Malvinas Crisis," 3; Feldman's assertions are well founded and supported by others. See, for example, Hastings and Jennings, *Battle for the Falklands*, 46.

¹⁵⁷ Falcoff, *Tale of Two Policies*, 49-53.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

In October 1983, Argentina returned to civilian control with the election of Radical Party leader Raúl Alfonsín as president. To be sure, Alfonsín's victory was a paramount shift in the history of Argentina. Not only did it represent the first legitimate election in years, but it also marked the first time the Peronists had ever been defeated in a presidential election, eliminating the notion of invincibility that had remained so prevalent in the movement's mystique for generations.

In the United States, Alfonsín's victory was easily obscured by the morass of entrenched partisan politics and ideological differences that had become so customary in the preceding five years. Incredibly, the Reagan administration attempted to take responsibility for Argentina's return to democracy, while critics in the human rights community and the left in Congress promoted Alfonsín's election as evidence that "positive political forces had always lurked just below the surface, and that their late emergence was due to a...refusal by the White House to recognize their existence all along."¹⁵⁸

U.S. foreign policy objectives towards Argentina changed dramatically between 1977 and 1982, as did conditions on the ground. Yet, despite what proponents and critics of both administrations argue, neither approach had a great bearing on the eventual conclusion to the Argentine situation, except in fortuitous ways.

¹⁵⁸ Falcoff, *Two Policies*, 55. For an account of political reactions from both sides, see Peter D. Bell, "Democracy and Double Standards," *World Policy Journal* 2 (Fall 1985): 711-730.

With Jimmy Carter's inauguration and the subsequent announcement of American military aid cuts in February 1977, the Argentine junta made a conscientious decision to temporarily sacrifice strong bilateral relations with the U.S. if that was the price for continuing its counterterrorism war and its attendant abuses. The Carter administration's emphasis on human rights resulted in outright hostility between the two countries. Every U.S. sanction enforced under the Carter administration had little or no influence on the Argentina's economy or military vigilance and failed at its ultimate goal of staying the hand of the junta. Likewise, the vast majority of human rights abuses committed during the dirty war occurred during Carter's tenure. In retrospect, Carter's human rights policies and the Argentine military's perception of its own national security interests resulted in a fundamental clash in the basic orientation of bilateral objectives.

However, these facts should not obscure Carter's success in the human rights front. Although difficult to gauge, the Carter administration's continued pressure did succeed in protecting and saving the lives of a number of individuals, most notably that of Jacobo Timerman. Likewise, by separating himself from the Argentine military during the dirty war, Carter succeeded in preserving the status and reputation of the United States in the eventuality of a return to civilian rule. Therefore, while criticism of the degree to which Carter's policies extended may be legitimate, it is unreasonable to condemn the basis upon which his policies were founded and the success such measures brought about.

Yet, Carter's stringent emphasis on human rights also resulted in a number of unintended consequences. By adhering to a strict foreign policy lacking flexibility and based largely on human rights considerations, the Carter administration made it a virtual impossibility to recognize or reward any advancement in Argentina. This was largely because a complete regime

change represented the only criterion by which the standards the U. S. administration set could be satisfied.

Likewise, Carter unintentionally and unknowingly provided the basis for undermining his own grain embargo by continually punishing and ostracizing the junta. Economically, the grain embargo of 1980 offered the junta requisites from the U.S. it could not accept and opportunities with the Soviets it could not possibly reject. Thereafter, the Carter administration hastily attempted to remedy the situation. In order not to appear contradictory, the administration noted that much of the change towards Argentina was in response to the improved human rights situation. Yet, the sudden change in foreign policy was clearly not a byproduct of the situation on the ground but by the junta's newfound international relevance with the grain embargo and the apparent failure of three years of strict sanctions.

As confirmed by his successor's policies, Carter's lack of flexibility in foreign policy probably did not make much of a difference either. Ronald Reagan quickly attempted to rebuild bilateral relations by completely removing human rights considerations from the public arena and recognizing improvements in that area in Argentina. Despite this, in most areas of genuine importance, the junta often went its own way. Even their shared policy on Central America, perhaps the greatest arena of understanding and cooperation between the two countries, was more an agreement to curtail the spread of communism rather than the result of an outright alliance.

Yet, competing political ideologies and partisan politics in the United States also obscured important questions raised following the failure of the grain embargo. Was a change in foreign policy worth attempting? How useful were sanctions beyond a definite point? Would an attempt at reconciliation better serve U.S. policy objectives by providing America more leverage

than continued ostracism? Unfortunately, the partisan landscape in Washington often disguised any objective consideration of such policies, rendering the human rights situation in Argentina secondary to the reputation and prominence of each political party.

If Carter had succeeded in his reelection campaign and followed the same policies he employed from 1977 to 1980, it is unlikely that the regime would have collapsed any sooner or responded any more favorably. Likewise, had the foreign policies adhered to during the Reagan administration been in place since 1977, perhaps there would have been even greater numbers of victims during the dirty war. From either vantage point, it is clear that American foreign policy objectives were severely restricted by the junta's perceived threat of communist expansion and the limited leverage the U.S. garnered in bilateral relations. Yet, such conjecture should not obscure the fact that it is most likely in either case that the status of Argentina's economy would have eventually elicited the same political turmoil that prompted Galtieri to attempt a diversionary military adventure in the South Atlantic.

In retrospect, Argentina's dirty war presented a virtual no-win situation for either administration. Had Argentina been poorer, closer in proximity to the U.S., and more reliant on American funding and support, perhaps both Carter's and Reagan's foreign policies would have garnered more influence and leverage over the junta. Were all that true, it is easy to assume that the sanctions the Carter administration applied may have prompted greater results. Perhaps the sanctions might never have been employed in the first place. Likewise, the Reagan administration might have succeeded in preventing a war between allies. As it was, however, both administrations assumed that American leverage alone was enough to produce the desired effects they intended. Yet, due to Argentina's relative autonomy from the U.S., the distance between the two countries, and openly competing economies, American foreign policy never

acquired the influence required to produce such results. Under such circumstances, neither administration succeeded in its foreign policy objectives towards Argentina. Try as they might, Carter could not tear down the junta and Reagan could not resuscitate it.

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