

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 1982

"WE'RE FRIENDS OF BOTH SIDES"!

- STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT CONTINUES IMMORAL LATIN AMERICAN POLICY
- GALTIERI'S PERSONAL ROLE IN MURDER OF 15,000 ARGENTINES
- STEADY DETERIORATION IN ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD AS REAGAN
WOOS BUENOS AIRES' HELP "TO BRING DEMOCRACY TO CENTRAL AMERICA"
- ARGENTINA SUPPLIES HESSIANS TO CARRY OUT COVERT ACTIVITIES IN
CENTRAL AMERICA
- REAGAN OFFICIALS BREAK BREAD IN EMBASSY AS ARGENTINA USES FORCE
- REAGAN'S DOUBLE STANDARD: "OVERTURN OF WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENTARY
DEMOCRACY IN GRENADA" BAD; IN ARGENTINA, NOT SO BAD!
- NATO ALLIANCE SWAPPED FOR SOVIETS BEST FRIEND IN SOUTH AMERICA

The Reagan administration has all but forgotten that the current Argentine military government is headed by a general who personally participated in the murder of 15,000 Argentines since it seized power in 1976. But the Falkland invasion is reminding the world of the true nature of the regime that Washington insists is made up of its "friends". Argentina's occupation of the Falkland Islands on April 2 made a shambles of careful efforts launched in the immediate aftermath of President Reagan's electoral victory toward seeking a rapprochement with that country. The Argentine attack should have convincingly illustrated to U.S. policymakers who have so single-mindedly wooed Buenos Aires for its professed anti-communism, that its most fundamental value isn't any particular ideology, but cynical and blatant opportunism.

The Falkland action is but the latest and most dramatic in a series of provocative steps the Argentines have taken in the past year to take every advantage of Reagan's benevolent courtship. While the administration strove to persuade Congress that the human rights situation in Argentina had improved, in order to facilitate a resumption of U.S. arms sales and military assistance, the Argentine government actually increased its repression of political dissidents:

- Just days after Gen. Vernon Walters (ret.), Reagan's official emissar

to Latin American authoritarian regimes, visited Argentina last February to explain the new administration's "quiet diplomacy" approach to human rights issues and its desire for closer ties with one of the region's worst human rights violators, 9 leading Argentine human rights leaders, including Emilio Mignone and Jose Frederico Westerkamp, were arrested on February 27 and detained without charges.

--On March 12, a meeting of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo was broken up by Argentine police and 50 of the members arrested. In mid-May, tear gas canisters were hurled into the offices of the Commission of Relatives of Disappeared Persons and Political Prisoners from an unidentified car. The Service for Peace and Justice group of Nobel laureate Adolfo Perez Esquivel, who is now visiting Washington, found a bomb in its offices in May which it was able to deactivate. Yet on July 14, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Bushnell, speaking for the Reagan administration, defied the evidence and pleaded with Congress that Argentina's human rights record had "substantially improved."

--On the same day, September 4, that Argentine Foreign Minister Oscar Camilion was assuring a Washington press conference that his government's human rights performance had improved, two Argentine opposition politicians Julio Barbaro and Juan Carlos Gallegos, were abducted in downtown Buenos Aires in an operation "so large it could only have been security forces," according to Mignone.

In yesterday's Barbados speech to assembled leaders of five east Caribbean island nations, President Reagan stated that "...all of us are concerned with the overturn of Westminster parliamentary democracy in Grenada." Aside from the gross distortion that Grenada had a functioning parliamentary institution under the dictatorial regime of Eric Gairy, who was overthrown by the current Grenadan leadership in 1979, the President's apparent strong feelings on these matters do not extend to Argentina. That country has been under a state of siege since 1974; no prospect for elections exist in the near future; military courts control the judicial process; congress has been closed; the activities of political parties suspended; and the constitution has been arbitrarily amended by military decree.

When addressing the deterioration of U.S.-Nicaraguan relations, the Reagan administration frequently cites the Sandinistas' abstention on the UN resolution condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as among its principal sins, as well as their acceptance of modest amounts of Soviet military hardware. Yet in Reagan's cozying up to Argentina, hypocrisy runs rampant:

--Argentina was single-handedly responsible for breaking the back of the Carter initiative to embargo grain sales to the Soviet Union following the Afghanistan invasion. During 1980, Argentina became the largest exporter of grain to the U.S.S.R., and increased its overall Soviet exports that year by 380 percent, according to the Journal of Commerce.

--In July 1980, in the midst of the grain embargo, Argentina concluded a five-year agreement with the Soviet Union to provide a minimum of 4.5 million tons of feed grains a year. Argentina exceeded that amount by more than 11 million tons, according to sources in Argentina's Trade Secretariat.

--The Soviet Union consistently has blocked any effort to condemn Argentina before the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Commission. In 1980, the Soviet Union and Argentina exchanged visits of generals in which medals were bestowed upon the foreign guests. At the very moment that Washington was professing its friendship with Argentina after the Falkland invasion, its foreign minister was lavishly hosting in Buenos Aires a Soviet trade mission led by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade.

--In 1982, Argentina is expected to double its imports of Soviet-made machinery to \$100 million. Last year, Argentina announced a five-year agreement to export up to 100,000 tons of beef per year to the Soviets, an agreement which could bring in as much as \$1 billion in 1982. In 1980, according to Argentine Undersecretary of International Negotiations Alfredo Esposito, Argentina's exports to the U.S.S.R. amounted to \$1.8 billion, leaving them with a trade surplus of more than \$1.75 billion with the Soviet Union. To facilitate the burgeoning trade between the two countries, a Argentine-Soviet Chamber of Commerce has been formed.

Argentina has been equally as oblivious to U.S. interests in the field of nuclear energy. It has by far the most developed nuclear industry of any country in Latin America, with one plant that has been operational since 1974 and two more, Embeche and Atucha II, coming on line in the near

since 1974 and two more, Embeche and Atuche II, coming on line in the near future. Vice Admiral Carlos Castro Madero, president of the National Commission of Atomic Energy (CNEA), has assured its hemispheric neighbors that Argentina is only interested in nuclear energy for "peaceful purposes." But there are ominous signs to the contrary:

--Argentina has persistently refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Madero has argued that it only discriminates against emerging nuclear powers and that it is "irrelevant" to stopping the arms race.

--Meanwhile, Madero has discussed the possibilities of exporting Argentine nuclear technology to several Latin American countries, including such notable human rights abusers as Colombia, Uruguay and Guatemala.

--Madero also indicated in December that Argentina is studying the possibility of establishing a nuclear assistance program with the Soviet Union. The U.S. has refused to provide such assistance because of Argentina's refusal to sign the non-proliferation treaty. On March 4, 1982, Madero said that Argentina will purchase 45 pounds of 20 percent enriched uranium from the Soviets. Though denying any intended military uses for the nuclear materials, Madero reserved his country's right to build nuclear explosive devices "for peaceful purposes."

--Perhaps the most eloquent statement on the chameleon nature of Argentine politics, and the irrationality of the Reagan administration's avid wooing of that military regime, are the parallel cases of Central America and the Falkland incursion. Numerous press reports have confirmed the presence of an estimated 50 Argentine paramilitary advisers in Honduras and El Salvador, operating under the guise of "military attaches." The reports have indicated that in Honduras their real mission is to train anti-Sandinist commando squads to carry out terrorist operations in Nicaragua, allegations which have been buttressed by the destruction of several bridges in the past month near the Honduran border. In El Salvador, their reported purpose is to train the Salvadoran security forces in "counter-terror" techniques.

--The Reagan administration, quick to decry acts of intervention from Cuba and Nicaragua which it charges are the principal cause for the continuation of the war in El Salvador, apparently sees no contradiction with the Argentine involvement. The administration has yet to make a public statement on the reports.

--Gen. Galtieri, Argentina's self-appointed president, is the former commander of the Second Army Corps which acquired a notorious reputation during the high point of military repression before 1980. Galtieri's unit established a large detention camp for political prisoners, and death squads were dispatched to Mexico to abduct exiled Montonero guerrillas. The operation collapsed when one of the death squad leaders defected and denounced the plan at a widely publicized Mexico City press conference.

The presence of UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Deputy Secretary of State Walter J. Stoessel Jr., and other U.S. officials at an Argentine embassy dinner party the evening of the invasion aptly illustrates the irony of the Reagan Argentine policy. It was no inconsequential social engagement, but part of a long-standing U.S. commitment to forge closer ties with Buenos Aires. The U.S. leaders chatted amiably with their hosts as Argentina military units moved against the civilian-ruled Falklands. Britain's parliamentary government has turned to the U.S. for a clear statement of support, but the appeal has fallen on deaf ears. The Reagan administration is apparently more comfortable with the company of dictatorships than democracies.

Argentina's unstable military government has produced neither security economic prosperity, nor a system of guarantees of law and free expression, but rather has visited upon the country the world's highest inflation rate, a low alliance potential, and international isolation. It now proposes to expand its tyranny and maladroitness to the Falklands. To its shame, the Reagan administration offers its services as a "mediator" rather than condemning what is a prima facie case of armed aggression against a sovereign state, Great Britain, one of the U.S.'s staunchest NATO allies.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 1982 *contact: Hank Lamport
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PRESS CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 1982

CAPITOL ROOM, NATIONAL PRESS BUILDING

10:30 A.M.

TOPIC: DETENTION AND TORTURE OF FDR/FMLN SPOKESMAN BY HONDURAN POLICE

FEATURED SPEAKER: RAMON CARDONA, SPOKESMAN IN THE UNITED STATES FOR
THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONARY FRONT OF EL SALVADOR

Ramon Cardona is a U.S.-based spokesman for the Democratic Revolutionary Front who has lived in this country for 14 years. While enroute from the United States to Panama on Tuesday, March 30, he was detained by Honduran immigration authorities during a stopover in Tegucigalpa and held incommunicado for the next three days by the Honduran security forces.

During his detention, Mr. Cardona was interrogated about his activities on the part of the FDR. Cardona charges that the interrogation included having his hands and feet bound and a hood placed over his head during the entire three-day period, and being deprived of both food and drink. A medical examination upon his arrival in the United States showed that he had indeed suffered such deprivation, as well as numerous head wounds from blows that had been inflicted during the questioning.

The Honduran Embassy in Washington, in response to international pressure concerning his detention, issued a statement on Friday, April 2, explaining that he had been taken into custody based on information the Honduran authorities had received that he was travelling on 'false documents.' It added he would be released as soon as confirmation was obtained which confirmed he was indeed the person identified by his personal papers -- Ramon Cardona. He was released that same day.

Mr. Cardona will relate details of his experience.
