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FORMER PRESS UNION HEAD CHARGES ARGENTINE NEWSMEN WITH COMPLICITY IN  
MILITARY REPRESSION

- Eduardo Jozami, former secretary-general of Buenos Aires Press Union, lists violations of journalistic ethics during military regime's "Dirty War" in forthcoming Washington Report interview*
- Some journalists helped in surveillance of citizens; incompetent newsmen rewarded with bribes, promotions in exchange for propaganda work for military*
- Somos magazine named as turncoat; now critical of military atrocities*
- Jozami, himself jailed for eight years, calls for immediate return of La Opinion to Jacobo Timerman*

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In an interview to be published in a forthcoming issue of COHA's biweekly publication, the Washington Report on the Hemisphere, Eduardo Jozami, former secretary-general of the Buenos Aires Press Union and a political prisoner under the Argentine military regime for eight years, charges that "many Argentine journalists who now hold prominent positions in the press corps there benefitted professionally" during military rule by suppressing potentially damaging information on human rights violations, distorting reporting on activities of the military, and collaborating with military officials by conducting propaganda services on behalf of the government.

Jozami, now working as a columnist for the Mexico City daily UnoMasUno, also stated in the Washington Report interview that many of those journalists who collaborated with the military regime's repression during the so-called "Dirty War" against suspected leftist subversives--in which over 15,000 Argentines disappeared in the late 1970s--are today among the most outspoken critics of the military.

Jozami was arrested in 1975 and eventually charged and convicted by the military regime of being a "subversive." Much-needed medical treatment for chronic health problems in 1980 was denied him by his captors, and his extended jailing was condemned at the time by leaders of international press and human rights organizations, including Charles A. Perlik, Jr., President of The Newspaper Guild (AFL-CIO; CLC) and Chairman of COHA's Board of Trustees. Now on a brief trip to the United States, Jozami met with Perlik last Friday to express his gratitude to The Newspaper Guild and COHA for their activities in

defense of press freedom in Argentina.

#### OF HEROES AND TRAITORS

In the Washington Report interview, to be published February 7, the former unionist, who also served as undersecretary of the Argentine Federation of Journalists, criticized officials with the far-reaching ally Giscard, and the military regime. There were many others who endured relentless pressure, threats and imprisonment for the most part and some cooperation by the press corps about the Dirty War. Between 1973 and 1977, some 42 Argentine journalists disappeared in the military regime's "Process of National Reconstruction" while others were imprisoned, tortured or exiled. Jozami said in the interview.

Jozami characterized a recent charge by the noted Italian journalist, Oriana Fallaci, that all of the journalists who stayed in Argentina and continued their work during military rule were "traitors" as an "excessive generalization." He cited the plight of those journalists who, rather than fleeing the country or leaving the field, bore the constant pressures of official censorship of sensitive issues and, in many cases, authored anonymous articles detailing the Dirty War's repression to avoid offending the truth-happy back to the Argentine and international communities. The common practice of self-censorship was "an inevitable psychological consequence" of the enduring overt censorship and threat of reprisal by the government, Jozami said in the interview.

Jozami cited several cases of disappearance, detentions and forced exile of journalists daring to be critical of the regime's practices. In particular, he addressed those of Rodolfo Walsh, the former editor of the General Confederation of Workers' news publication, who disappeared in 1977, and Robert Cox, editor of the English-language daily Buenos Aires Herald, who was forced to flee the country after several threats to his life had been made. Cox now works as a journalist in Charleston, South Carolina.

#### OVERT VIOLATIONS OF NEWS ETHICS

Jozami told the Washington Report that Argentine journalists friendly to the military regime were given access to political prison and torture facilities, where they were able to meet with detainees. In no instance, however, did the journalists report what they had seen or even the existence of the prisons. Other journalists, according to Jozami, assisted Rear Admiral Emilio Massera in his self-promoting efforts to succeed former President Lt. Gen. Jorge Videla when Videla's power appeared to be waning.

Jozami also indicated that many journalists published armed forces press materials often without identifying the source of the stories, and frequently availed themselves of short-term job opportunities at government information centers abroad--well-paying positions open only to friendly journalists. Jozami stated that a number of these persons prospered far beyond what their journalistic talents would merit, and that today, some hold very prominent positions in the Argentine press corps.

Jozami declined to release publicly the names of journalists involved in military-oriented activities until a complete study can be carried out, although he privately identified several cases known to him to COHA. He did make an exception, however, with Somos magazine, a right-wing Argentine national newsweekly. Somos' editorial staff enthusiastically supported the military regime's "Process of National Reconstruction," the political program used to legitimate the regime's campaign of terror. Now, the magazine has sharply veered and has become a timely, as well as vociferous critic of atrocities committed by the military.

#### OPPORTUNISM AND RESTORATION

Following the debacle of the spring 1982 Falklands war, one that served as the coup de grace for the military regime's political credibility, a wave of reports and accusations began appearing in the Argentine media regarding the thousands of cases of disappearances and torture. Since the October 30 election of civilian President Raul Alfonsin, investigative reporting of the tragic events of 1976-83 have become daily fare in Argentina. The Dirty War repression is a national obsession in the country of 28 million, one that has produced a near-unanimous call for thorough and immediate redress.

But, in the Washington Report interview, Jozami charges many journalists, including the turncoats, with commercial and sensationalist exploitation of the public's outcry, while noting that the press could serve to further the course of official investigations. He notes that the restoration of an independ-

en, free-thinking press in Argentina may take time to a large extent due to the fact that the cast of editorial and publishing boards of many major Argentine publications remains essentially the same as it was under the military government.

CALL TO RESTORE POSITIONS

The former union official called in the interview for media organizations to offer back the posts of Argentine journalists returning from exile or imprisonment. In particular, Jozami cited the case of Jacobo Timerman, the former publisher of the influential Buenos Aires daily La Opinion, who was arrested without charge by the military in October 1977 and tortured, before being exiled from the country and stripped of his citizenship. Jozami notes that while Timerman may have accumulated his share of admirers and enemies for his political views and his later indictment of Argentine atrocities, there was nonetheless no moral or legal basis for the military government's seizure of La Opinion. He called on the Alfonsin administration to return the paper to its former owner, who recently has travelled back from exile in Israel to Argentina to assert his claims and help bring to justice his torturers, as well as those of the many thousands of victims of six years of military rule.

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