

ARTICLES.

■ AN INTERNATIONAL STORY

Kissinger and
The 'Dirty War'

MARTIN EDWIN ANDERSEN

Just three months after Argentina's generals took power in 1976, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger gave that country's military a green light to continue its "dirty war," according to a State Department memorandum obtained by InterNation. This document shows that in early 1977 Robert Hill, then the U.S. Ambassador to Buenos Aires, told a top Carter Administration official that Kissinger had given his approval to the repression in which at least 9,000 people were kidnapped and secretly murdered. Kissinger, he charged, put his imprimatur on the massive disappearances in a June 10, 1976, meeting in Santiago, Chile, with Argentina's Foreign Minister, Adm. César Guzzetti. Both men were attending the Sixth General Assembly of the Organization of American States, whose agenda, ironically, had been dominated by the human rights issue.

Guzzetti was one of the most outspoken advocates of the dirty war. In August 1976 he told the United Nations: "My idea of subversion is that of the left-wing terrorist organizations. Subversion or terrorism of the right is not the same thing. When the social body of the country has been contaminated by a disease that eats away at its entrails, it forms antibodies. These antibodies cannot be considered in the same way as the microbes."

The ninety-minute early morning meeting, at Santiago's Hotel Carrera, across from the Moneda Palace, came just three weeks after Hill had urgently warned Kissinger of the worsening Argentine rights record. A word from the Secretary of State would have helped rein in the generals. Although a secret analysis by the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, dated April 5, 1976, noted that "human rights could become a problem area as the military clamps down on terrorism," it went on: "To date, however, the junta has followed a reasonable, prudent line in an obvious attempt to avoid being tagged with a 'Made in Chile' label." According to the records of the Center for Legal and Social Studies, Argentina's foremost human rights group, by the time Kissinger and Guzzetti met, 1,022 people had been "disappeared" forever. At least another 7,938 met the same fate afterward.

When Kissinger arrived at the Santiago conference, Hill said, the Argentine generals were nervous about the prospect of being called on the carpet by the United States for their human rights record. But Kissinger merely told Guz-

zetti the regime should solve the problem before the U.S. Congress reconvened in 1977. *A buen entendedor, pocas palabras* ("To those quick to understand, few words are needed"). Within three weeks of the meeting a wave of wholesale executions began, and hundreds of detainees were killed in reprisal for attacks by leftist guerrillas. The memorandum shows that Hill believed the responsibility for this ballooning state terrorism to be Kissinger's.

Hill is dead; Guzzetti suffered lasting brain damage in a 1977 attack. Kissinger referred inquiries to former Secretary of State William Rogers, who was with him in Santiago. Rogers did "not specifically remember" a meeting with Guzzetti, but added: "What Henry would have said if he had had such a meeting was that human rights were embedded in our policy, for better or worse. He'd have said sympathetic things about the need for effective methods against terrorism, but without abandoning the rule of law." But Patricia Derian, Carter's Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, confirmed the account of Hill's charges and was "nauseated" to learn of Kissinger's role. Two former U.S. diplomats also corroborate Hill's story.

Hill's own past appears to put him above suspicion that his charges against Kissinger were politically motivated. "Hill's biography reads like a satirical left-wing caricature of a 'yanqui imperialist,'" noted the authoritative newsletter "Latin America." He was a former vice president of W.R. Grace and a former director of the United Fruit Company. Despite five ambassadorial postings to Spanish-speaking countries, he never mastered the language. Hill was directly linked in testimony before the U.S. Senate with the planning of the coup that overthrew the elected government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954. Before being assigned to Buenos Aires by Richard Nixon, he was Assistant Secretary of Defense responsible for international security.

Like many others, Hill had greeted the coup against the outrageously corrupt, incompetent government of Juan Perón's widow, Isabel, with relief. He was especially impressed by the military's willingness to crack down on top drug traffickers, who had been protected by Isabel Perón's inner circle. By the time of the coup, a siege atmosphere was gripping the U.S. Embassy; a U.S. honorary consul had been murdered by the left-wing Peronist Montoneros, and a U.S. diplomat had been wounded by the Marxist E.R.P. guerrillas. The Ambassador's residence was heavily fortified; Hill shuttled back and forth under a guard worthy of Al Capone. Most U.S. businessmen had fled Buenos Aires, fearful of kidnapping or death. "There are difficult days ahead," Hill warned the National Security Council in a secret Country Analysis and Strategy Paper (CASP) the day before the March 24 coup. "The strategy is essentially one of protecting our people and property from terrorism and our trade and investments from economic nationalism during this trying period."

Moreover, human rights did not immediately appear to be a problem to Hill. The April 5 Bureau of Intelligence and Research analysis concluded that "terrorism from the right will be more susceptible to control than that from the left,

Martin Edwin Andersen is writing a book on the Argentine "dirty war," to be published next year by Addison-Wesley. InterNation is an international consortium of publications, drawing on a global network of journalists.

because right-wing operatives frequently have been attached to groups now directly under military supervision."

Less than a month later events had overtaken any such wishful thinking. On May 18 two prominent Uruguayans exiled in Buenos Aires were dragged from their homes by unidentified men. Héctor Gutiérrez Ruíz was a former president of the Uruguayan House of Deputies; Zelmar Michelini, a charismatic former senator. Neither was involved in armed politics, nor did they belong to the ultraradical left. Kissinger himself cabled the U.S. Embassies in Montevideo and Buenos Aires, asking for more details following reports by Amnesty International about the "brutal detention" of the pair. Two days later Hill cabled Kissinger that "such an operation would be extremely difficult if not impossible to carry out without [government of Argentina] acquiescence."

On May 20 the politicians' bodies were found in a car with those of two other people. One of Gutiérrez Ruíz's eyes was poked out, his knuckles were mangled and burns scarred his front and back. Half his face had been crushed. Michelini had a bullet through his head. Their killers left leaflets suggesting the slayings were the work of leftists angered by the victims' supposed "betrayal" of an Uruguayan guerrilla group. On May 25 Hill sent a secret cable to the Secretary of State, requesting instructions. The page-long copy made available to me was heavily excised, with only the first two and the last lines left untouched.

Hill wrote: "In view of the general worsening human rights situation here, I believe the time has come for a démarche at the highest level. Hence, I request instructions to ask for an urgent appointment with the foreign minister. . . . In view of the pace of developments, I would appreciate reply by immediate cable." Hill's request was approved by Under Secretary of State Joseph Sisco.

On May 27 Kissinger sent a secret cable, "Subject: Human Rights Situation in Argentina," to the embassies in Montevideo and Buenos Aires:

Acting Assistant Secretary [Hewson] Ryan called in Ambassador Vásquez May 27 to warn him about the growing concern in the US about the violence in Argentina and the reported disappearances of individuals. This concern is being expressed by major universities, the responsible press—such as *The New York Times*—and by members of both Houses of Congress, and is having an unfavorable impact on Argentina's image in this country. If this continues, it would make cooperation with Argentina difficult, as happened in the case of Chile. . . . Ambassador Ryan said there is concern in the US not only about the arrests being carried out by the [Argentines] but also about the failure of the [government] to control the activities of right-wing terrorist groups.

If Kissinger had any lingering doubts about what was happening in Argentina, they were dispelled by subordinates such as Hill. Yet his cable is noteworthy for its blandness; his rendition of Ryan's meeting shows the Argentines were told outside pressure—not U.S. policy—endangered business as usual. Two weeks later Kissinger went to Chile.

Hill had quickly realized what was occurring. The new military regime was not limiting its rampage to the guerrillas, against whom it used methods that violated every accepted convention of warfare and the treatment of prison-

ers. It had embarked on a crusade against anyone threatening the armed forces' version of what they called "Western Christian civilization." Hill's alarm grew as he heard of examples of the horror. Three priests and two seminarians were murdered by vengeful police; an American priest and the daughter of a U.S. missionary were tortured; a progressive Catholic bishop was killed in a staged car crash.

"Hill was shaken, he became very disturbed, by the case of the son of a thirty-year embassy employee, a student who was arrested, never to be seen again," recalled former *New York Times* reporter Juan de Onis. "Hill took a personal interest." He went to the Interior Minister, an army general with whom he had worked on drug cases, saying, "Hey, what about this? We're interested in this case." He buttonholed Guzzetti and, finally, President Jorge R. Videla himself. "All he got was stonewalling; he got nowhere," de Onis said. "His last year was marked by increasing disillusionment and dismay, and he backed his staff on human rights right to the hilt." This view of events was confirmed by Wayne Smith, who was Hill's political officer at the time.

It was a troubled, angry Hill who met in early 1977 with a senior Carter Administration official, eager to unburden himself about Kissinger's role and explain why the generals were only partly to blame for the slaughter. According to the memorandum:

Hill said that he had made arrangements seven times for a Kissinger visit to Argentina. Each time the Secretary cancelled. Finally Kissinger decided to go to the OAS meeting. . . . In the middle of the meetings, the Secretary wanted to visit Buenos Aires. This time the Argentines refused because they did not want to interrupt OAS activities being held in a neighboring state. Kissinger and Foreign Minister Guzzetti agreed to meet in Santiago.

The Argentines were very worried that Kissinger would lecture to them on human rights. Guzzetti and Kissinger had a very long breakfast but the Secretary did not raise the subject. Finally Guzzetti did. Kissinger asked how long will it take you (the Argentines) to clean up the problem. Guzzetti replied that it would be done by the end of the year. Kissinger approved.

In other words, Ambassador Hill explained, Kissinger gave the Argentines the green light. [Emphasis added]

Later (about August), the Ambassador discussed the matter personally with Kissinger, on the way back to Washington from a Bohemian Grove meeting in San Francisco. Kissinger confirmed the Guzzetti conversation. Hill said that the Secretary felt that Ford would win the election. Hill disagreed. In any case, the Secretary wanted Argentina to finish its terrorist problem before year end—before Congress reconvened in January 1977.

In September, Hill prepared an eyes only memorandum for the Secretary urging that the U.S. vote against an IDB [Inter-American Development Bank] loan on Harkin [human rights] grounds. Hill felt that he would strengthen his hand in dealing with the Argentines. The memo was given to Assistant Secretary [Harry] Shlaudeman. The latter asked the Ambassador personally if Hill really wanted to send the memo to the Secretary, who had already decided to vote for the loan. Shlaudeman suggested that the Secretary might fire Hill. Hill told Shlaudeman to send the memo. (Hill's IDB

memo was ignored. We voted for the loan, warning the Argentines, however, that we might not be able to support future Argentine projects in the IDB unless the human rights picture changes.)

When I asked Kissinger spokesperson Chris Vick about what transpired in Santiago, she said the former Secretary of State "doesn't have a great deal of memory about events in 1975 and 1976." She said Kissinger expressed "a great deal of affection for Ambassador Hill." Asked about whether they shared the trip back from the Bohemian Grove retreat, she replied, "Yeah, I guess he was on the plane."

Vick also referred me to Kissinger's public address at the O.A.S. conference, titled "Human Rights and the Western Hemisphere," in which Kissinger proclaimed: "One of the most compelling issues of our time, and one which calls for the concerted action of all responsible peoples and nations, is the necessity to protect and extend the fundamental rights of humanity."

The rhetoric, however, was at variance with accounts of Kissinger's meeting with Guzzetti, with the background to the O.A.S. speech itself and with the Secretary of State's attitude once he was out of public office. A U.S. diplomat who asked to remain anonymous told me he had been told of Kissinger's green light by Argentine military sources. Wayne Smith, Hill's political officer, says, "Kissinger told Guzzetti in Santiago, Look, we *have* to do these things [speak out publicly on the rights issue], but don't take it too seriously." Certainly some of the Latin Americans at the O.A.S. remained unimpressed by Kissinger's speech. "He said genocide gets you 'adverse international judgment,'" said one Venezuelan representative of the social democratic government of Carlos Andres Pérez. "Has he forgotten where he comes from?"

There was a further suggestion that Kissinger's commitment on human rights was meant for public consumption only. Robert White, who later became Ambassador to El Salvador, was deputy representative of the U.S. delegation at the Santiago conference. He had made a public statement there on human rights, based on a position paper approved by the State Department. Kissinger sent him a telegram of reprimand (although he later backed down after former Representative William Maillard, the head of the delegation, sent his own stinging reply to Kissinger). White also had a report from what he regarded as a reliable Chilean source of a meeting between Kissinger and Chilean dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet. "Kissinger told Pinochet he would have to make reference to human rights in his speech," White told me, "but that's all he would hear on the subject."

In 1978, long after the Argentine military's policy of creating massive disappearances had been conclusively demonstrated, making the country an international pariah, Kissinger was the guest of Argentine President Videla during the World Cup soccer competition. The generals used the visit to show they enjoyed the sympathy of the onetime superstar of U.S. diplomacy. At the end of the tournament Kissinger held a news conference in which he criticized the Carter Administration for not understanding that human rights were a necessary casualty in the battle against terror-

ism. He also spent much time in public in the company of the regime's Minister of the Economy—and David Rockefeller's friend—José Martínez de Hoz. Known as "the Wizard of Hoz," his policies were the ideological framework for the murder of hundreds of labor activists unconnected to the guerrillas.

A firm, principled word from Kissinger in June 1976 might have stopped the bloodbath in the making. In the early months of military rule, the armed forces were not unaware of international pressure for human rights. Even as late as the end of 1976, U.S. diplomats learned, Argentina's top military leaders were still debating the international consequences of the repression. By the time Jimmy Carter took office, however, the killing had gone too far for the generals to turn back.

Hill returned to Buenos Aires from the United States in early September 1976. "The Argentine press had been saved for him and he sifted through stacks of newspapers," the Hill memorandum reads. "He saw that the terrorist death toll had climbed steeply. The Ambassador said that he wondered—although he had no proof—whether the Argentine government was not trying to solve its terrorist problem before the end of the year."

As Hill suspected, the mass execution of prisoners and suspects became a generalized phenomenon only after the Kissinger-Guzzetti meeting. More than seventy people, including the three priests and two seminarians, were murdered in reprisal for the July 2 bombing of a police headquarters by the Montoneros in which a score of people were killed. On August 20, thirty people were executed and their bodies blown up in reprisal for the assassination of retired Gen. Omar Actis. More than fifty were executed in response to the bombing of a police station in the provincial capital of



DRAWINGS BY RICO LINS

La Plata. Thirty others were slain in reprisal for an attack on the Ministry of Defense. Forty more died over the New Year's holiday in retaliation for the killing of a colonel.

"It sickened me," said Patt Derian, "that with an imperial wave of his hand, an American could sentence people to death on the basis of a cheap whim. As time went on I saw Kissinger's footprints in a lot of countries. It was the repression of a democratic ideal." □

■ A SIXTIES REUNION

The Real 'Big Chill' in Michigan

ELLEN PERLEY FRANK

When the temperature hit the 90s on Labor Day afternoon, most of the 200 people at a three-day reunion of 1960s Ann Arbor activists had left Camp Tamarack in Ortonville, Michigan, and headed back to their widely scattered homes. Four heat-weary stragglers—three women and the 4-year-old son of one of them—stood in front of a camp cabin and weighed the pros and cons of one more swim, even though the lifeguard had gone off duty. Tequila Minsky, a New York photographer and professional party-giver, settled the discussion by declaring, "We've never followed the rules—why should we now?"

There is a cliché about 1960s activists: that they opted for the rules, sold out, took upwardly mobile jobs, bought pricey foreign cars and feel guilty about the gap between their past and present lives. One major frame around this picture is *The Big Chill*, the movie written and directed by Larry Kasdan, a 1970 graduate of the University of Michigan. In 1960s Ann Arbor, Kasdan was working for a university film society while thousands of other students, teachers and "outside agitators" pursued their avenues of politics in a community that throbbed with activism of all stripes. None of these people forgot their education. Kasdan went on to make Hollywood movies based largely on the hundreds of movies he watched in college. Maybe Kasdan and his friends traded in their ideals for their careers and fat bank accounts, but most of the Michigan graduates I know have bitterly criticized Kasdan for popularizing this image. The Labor Day reunion revealed that the activists have not abandoned their politics; the depth and diversity of their continuing political commitment came as an exalting surprise.

Ann Arbor in the 1960s was the home of the first draft board sit-in, the first anti-Vietnam War teach-in and the birthplace of Students for a Democratic Society; along with Columbia University and the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Michigan was the campus that most embodied the social-political movements of the decade. Those days of mass and often confrontational politics

have long since faded, but at the reunion it was evident that many veteran activists have adapted their politics to a more sedate life and the needs of their own communities.

On the second afternoon of the reunion, a committee of five veteran activists sat cross-legged at the end of a dock and worked up a page-and-a-half-long statement for the whole group. It affirms: "We have come to understand that attaining the goals of a just, peaceful, equitable and ecologically sound society requires a lifetime of commitment." It also lists a number of ongoing causes, beginning with "the growing menace of the nuclear arms race" and ending with "the callous disregard of the plight of our elders." The document was accepted with whoops, cheers, applause and nary a nay after a dinner of kosher fried chicken and egg noodles. (Camp Tamarack is a Jewish environmental camp, with totem poles in its dining room doorway carved with faces representing the twelve tribes of Israel.)

Have times changed? Richard Levy, who teaches English to adult Chinese immigrants in Boston, pointed out that "the committee was asked not to mention a laundry list of causes. . . In 1968 you couldn't have gotten a group of political people to agree even on punctuation, and here they did what we asked them not to do, and it was accepted unanimously."

The group's political diversity was documented in columns where people wrote their "Current Affiliation" when they signed the statement. This long affiliation roster includes: "Saskatchewan Coalition Against Cutbacks," "Rockford, Illinois, Peace and Justice Action," "Physicians for Social Responsibility and medical director, Jackson and Livingston [Michigan] Counties," "historian and agitator," "*Gay Community News*, Resist, Mobilization for Survival," "Ann Arbor City Council," "Psychologist, work with peace and women's issues," "auto worker/Detroiters for Dignity," "theater worker," "Marxist historian," "peace research—Cambridge, Mass.," "M.D., San Francisco County Jail," "registered nurse, Campaign Against Apartheid," "attorney and past president, National Lawyers Guild," and on and on and on.

You might notice one trend in these identifications. These are highly skilled and educated people, including many lawyers, doctors, artists and Ph.D.s who once marched on the Pentagon and now channel their politics into their work. Others have stuck with the 1960s call of working-class politics: Richard Feldman, one of the reunion organizers, has worked in a Ford truck plant for seventeen years and recently completed and found a publisher for an oral history of thirty auto workers. Frank Hammer, president of a United Auto Workers local, said, "When I told the people that I work with that I was coming to this reunion, one of them said, 'What we need is a little bit of the sixties in the eighties.' We are not only part of that history but in our own separate ways have continued that history."

The political scope has scaled down since then. "I remember people seriously telling me, 'The American Revolution is going to happen in a year or two,'" recalled Eric Chester, a former S.D.S. leader who now teaches economics at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and who proved at the reunion to be a whiz at child care

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