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Record Type: Record

To: Deborah B. Mohile
cc: Andrew Friendly, Aviva Steinberg
Subject: AMIA meeting in BA

Proposed participants -

1. Dr. Ruben Beraja, President Latin American Jewish Congress
2. Chaskiel Oscar Hansman, President, AMIA
3. Dr. Luis Czyzewski, 21 year old daughter killed in bombing
4. Raquel Norma de Lew, seriously injured in AMIA bombing, son was killed
5. Ana Maria Gaibisson de Serena, whose Catholic husband was killed in the AMIA bombing
6. Carlos Susevich, daughter died in Isreali embassy bombing

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October 6, 1997

Ms. Deborah Mohile
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Deborah,

Best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.

In advance of President Clinton's forthcoming visit to Argentina later this month, we request that you please forward the attached letters from the JCRC and Memoria Activa, families of victims of the AMIA terror attack, to the President. The letters ask the President to raise the issue of terrorism and Argentina's failure to apprehend the perpetrators of the attacks during his visit.

We are aware that due to the fact that the President will be visiting Buenos Aires on the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, it will be difficult for him to meet with members of the Argentinean Jewish community on this matter. However, this does not preclude his addressing terrorism publicly and in his meetings with President Menem.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Martin S. Begun
President

Harriet Mandel, Director
Israel and International Concerns

Michael S. Miller
Executive Vice President



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The JCRC is a beneficiary of the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York.

September 29, 1997

President Bill Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, representing over 60 Jewish organizations in the metropolitan area, we want to direct your attention to the issue of terrorism as you embark upon your forthcoming visit to Argentina.

To date, investigations into the terrorist attacks against the Argentine Jewish community, which destroyed the Israeli Embassy in 1992, and the AMIA Jewish Community Center in 1994, have failed in apprehending the perpetrators. As an acknowledged leader in the crusade against terrorism, you well know that until these investigations are resolved, the terror threat to the Western Hemisphere remains great. We, therefore, respectfully request that during your visit to Buenos Aires, you raise this matter in your meetings with President Carlos Menem and publicly call for a renewed effort by the Argentine authorities to solve these crimes.

The commitment of the United States to justice and the rule of law is our pride among the nations of the world. Fighting terror is an integral part of that commitment. This week, as the Jewish community around the globe celebrates the Jewish New Year, we are inspired by those who are dedicated to these principles for the sake of all humankind.

Attached is a special request from Memoria Activa, a group of family members of victims of the AMIA bombing, reinforcing the significance of your addressing this issue during your visit to their country.

We thank you for attention.

Sincerely,

Martin S. Begun
Martin S. Begun
President

Michael S. Miller
Michael S. Miller
Executive Vice President

MEMORIA ACTIVA

September 25th, 1997

William Clinton
President
United States of America
The White House
Washington

Dear President Clinton:

The occasion of your forthcoming visit to Argentina presents a special opportunity for you to address a major issue of common concern to the safety and security of the Western Hemisphere : fighting the scourge of terrorism.

Memoria Activa represents the families of victims of the terror attacks which destroyed the AMIA Jewish community center in 1994. This attack followed a terror assault on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992. To date, both crimes go unsolved. As long as the perpetrators of one terror attack go free, other terrorists are encouraged to commit similar crimes elsewhere. Until the terrorists are apprehended, we in Argentina are vulnerable to other attacks, but so are others.

The capture and prosecution of Timothy Mc Veigh in the Oklahoma City bombing sent an important message regarding the determination of your government to combat terror.

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- 2 -

Because of the abiding commitment of the United States to fight terror, we hope that you will use the occasion of your visit to our country to address the lack of resolution of the Argentinean attacks in your meetings with President Menem and other government officials. Your voice will send an unequivocal message that terror will not be tolerated.

Finally, we respectfully invite you to visit the site of the AMIA bombing and observe a minute of silence in memory of the victims of terrorism.

We appreciate your attention and look forward to your visit to Buenos Aires.

Sincerely,



Norma Lew



Enrique Burbinsky

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Septer

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

When you visit Argentina next month, we urge you to raise the issue of the bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires. Specifically, we ask that you make a public statement calling for a renewed effort to find those responsible for this terrorist attack.

As you know, the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires was bombed on July 18, 1994. Eighty-seven people were killed and over two hundred people were injured. Many of the victims were children. In addition, terrorists bombed the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992, killing twenty nine people. In both cases, the terrorists targeted a place and a time where they would kill as many people as possible.

No progress has been made in finding those responsible for either attack. The investigation into the attacks appears to be half-hearted and those responsible for these murders remain free.

Every week since the bombing, the families of the victims have gathered in front of the court house in Buenos Aires. They hold a silent vigil, trying to bring the world's attention to this injustice. By raising this issue -- both in private meetings and in public statements -- you would show the government of Argentina that combating terrorism is an American priority.

Members of the Argentine Jewish community feel alone in their efforts to bring the terrorists to justice. We urge you to show that the United States stands with them in the fight against terrorism.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Mikulski

Barbara A. Mikulski

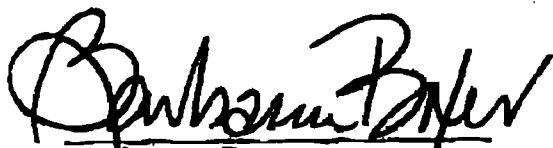
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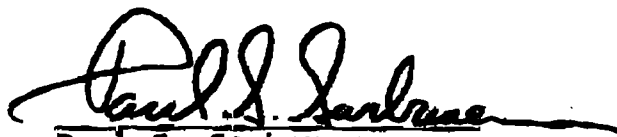
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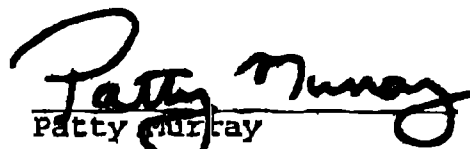
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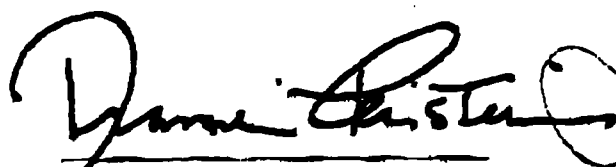
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September 25, 1997
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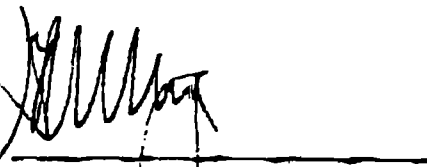

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B ' N A I B ' R I T H

TOMMY P. BAER, INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

July 17, 1997

His Excellency Carlos Saul Menem
President of the Republic of Argentina
Casa Rosada
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dear Mr. President:

Today marks the third anniversary of the terrorist bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires, in which eighty-six people were killed and more than two hundred injured. Occuring just two years after a similar attack on the Israeli Embassy to Argentina, this act was clearly the most deadly anti-Semitic attack in the hemisphere as well as one of the most serious terrorist attacks overall. In brief, this was a devastating attack against all of Argentina.

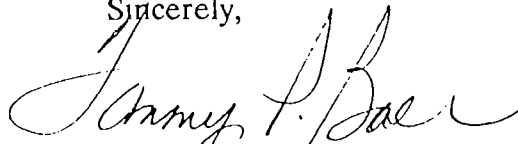
Within these three years, however, the perpetrators have remained unidentified and unpunished. In addition to the anguish that this brings the survivors and family members of the victims, it also creates a climate of fear and uncertainty that invites further terrorist activity.

Last week, members of my staff from our International Headquarters along with the leaders of B'nai B'rith in Argentina visited with several members of your government in Buenos Aires. They expressed the concern of our membership throughout fifty-six countries that this crime be solved and that peace and security be returned to the people of Argentina, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Jews and non-Jews around the world will be commemorating this anniversary with rallies, vigils, and prayer. We fully support these commemorations and the sentiment behind them, and we have encouraged our members to participate.

On behalf of the members of B'nai B'rith, I urge you and your government to do all that is within your power to bring the investigations of these terrorist acts to a speedy conclusion and to see that those responsible are brought to justice.

Sincerely,



Tommy P. Baer
International President

B ' N A I B ' R I T H

T O M M Y P . B A E R , I N T E R N A T I O N A L P R E S I D E N T

October 7, 1997

Deborah Mohile
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20050

Dear Ms. Mohile:

I wanted to take this opportunity before the President's trip to South America to praise his planned meeting with representatives of the Jewish Community in Argentina. As one of the largest Jewish communities in the world, the Argentine Jewish community and its concerns play a important role in the local and international issues facing Argentina and the region. We especially appreciate the attention paid to the victims of the still unsolved AMIA bombing, an issue close to the hearts of the entire Jewish community.

Though I am sure every effort has been made to be involve important Argentine Jewish leaders in these activities with the President, I would like to express my desire that B'nai B'rith Argentina be directly included. Our Argentine brethren are both an integral part of the worldwide membership B'nai B'rith as well as an important voice in the Jewish community of Argentina.

On behalf of the members of B'nai B'rith International, I would like to wish the President a safe and successful journey, and extend the best of wishes for the Jewish New Year.

Sincerely,



Tommy P. Baer
International President



B ' N A I B ' R I T H

C E N T E R F O R P U B L I C P O L I C Y

July 17, 1997

JUSTICE AND TERRORISM IN ARGENTINA: THE BOMBINGS OF THE AMIA AND THE ISRAELI EMBASSY

by Warren Eisenberg, Deputy Director

As the third anniversary of the bombing of the Buenos Aires' AMIA (Jewish Social Service Center) passes on July 18, there is a storm brewing in Argentina over accusations about high level court, security and other governmental officials' obstruction of the investigation. Tied into this picture of stalemate is the separate Supreme Court investigation of the five-year old bombing of the Israeli Embassy in March 1992.

Ruben Beraja, president of the DAIA, the national Jewish representative organization, promised to issue a report naming officials who have stonewalled the search for culprits. He cited Justice Carlos Fayt for bias shown to a Jew who came before him as a witness. And after Beraja testified before a special congressional committee looking into the bombings, leaders of two opposition parties, the center Radicals and center left Frepaso, called for the equivalent of impeaching the whole Supreme Court. In order to make progress in the Israel Embassy case, there have been suggestions that only one justice should be appointed to handle it; however, others suggest that it be combined with the investigation now being conducted by Judge Galeano. Moreover, to aid the investigations, laws have been proposed to use the American technique of granting some immunity or reduced sentences to those who provide inside information on the forces behind plots like the bombings. Although high officials, including President Carlos Saul Menem and Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella have been outspoken in the call for action and supportive of the demands from survivors and Jewish groups, the government is not supporting the specific requests for immunity. They have however, offered a one million reward for information on the culprits.

Speaking before a Memoria Activa rally in Buenos Aires last week, Daniel Mariaschin, Director of B'nai B'rith's Center for Public Policy told those who had lost relatives and friends in the bombings, "Every day that passes allowing the perpetrators to remain at large, is another in which justice is not served."

THE BOMBINGS

The two devastating attacks against Jewish or Israeli institutions in Buenos Aires resulted in the death of 29 people and injury to 252 at the Israeli Embassy and the death of 86 people in the assault on the AMIA, an agency central to the life of the country's Jewry, which housed such vital social services as birth and burial records, aid programs to the

Page 2/ Bombings in Argentina

needy and the aged, and cultural and educational resources. The building also housed the offices of DAIA.

The suicidal nature of the explosions has pointed suspicion to Iranian-backed Islamic extremists whose worldwide aim is to defeat the Middle East peace process and to create hostility between Jews and their neighbors. However, no evidence sufficient for a trial has yet appeared. Both Hizbollah and Iran have disclaimed responsibility for the AMIA attack. A possible motive may be their need to punish Carlos Saul Menem, Argentina's first president to visit Israel, who also happens to be of Syrian extraction.

With no clear path to a trial emerging after a year of intensive investigation, the Jewish community is despondent. The attacks are significant because they are directed at the largest Jewish community in Latin America which is estimated to be between 250,000 and 400,000 people.

In the AMIA case, seven suspects, including Buenos Aires provincial police, have been indicted for roles in supplying falsified vehicle documents involved in the bombing, and others are in prison. However, there has been no breakthrough to identify those who planned and executed the attacks. In the atmosphere of failure, the Jewish community has grown restive and cynical about the chances for justice being meted out in either case. There was, however, progress on one front. After B'nai B'rith that investigative judge, Juan Jose Galeano, devote his full attention to the case, the government acceded to the request and also Galeano's call for fulltime investigators picked from a list he recommended. He had previously operated the investigation on a part-time basis with limited help.

In a meeting with Judge Galeano in Washington early this month, he described barricades to progress in the investigation. Prosecutors, as well as Ruben Beraja, see a negative influence not only from old line officials with connections to others with a shady past in military regimes. They directly link the bombings to Iranians, as well as to Islamic extremists who operate in Argentina.

While those in jail are Argentine, the feeling is that they are neo-Nazis and anti-Semites with military or security backgrounds. They were drawn into performing more menial tasks in the attacks. In fact, scandalous revelations about the activities of Buenos Aires provincial police are embarrassing the national government, which initially only saw a "foreign connection."

While there remains government interest in finding answers at the highest level, critics point to a grim reality of corruption and complicity that confounds investigators. It recently involved a scandal of the Buenos Aires Provincial police who organized the desecration of tombstones at La Tablada, the country's largest Jewish cemetery, along with the grisly murder of a journalist whose probing may have gotten too close to sources of the bombings.

THE SUPREME COURT INVESTIGATION

While Judge Galeano's investigation is stymied, there are seven suspects in prison. The investigation of the Israeli Embassy bombing is in the hands of the full Supreme Court and is going nowhere. An obstacle to finding the culprits was created by a now retired Supreme Court justice who commissioned a "political" study of the attack by the country's Engineering Institute. Using a computer model -- not actual facts gathered from investigators -- the Institute determined that the source of the explosion was an "arms cache" in the basement. This conclusion flew in the face of the views of Argentine, American, Israeli, British and French experts, who noted that the external impact from a vehicle delivered bomb at the entrances, blew the front door to the back of the building.

More pressing is the reality that Argentina faces a threat from its open borders, particularly with Paraguay and Brazil. The tri-border region's thriving and unchecked legal and illicit business invites heavy traffic in drug running, contraband, arms and terrorists. However, Argentina has stepped up the professionalization of its weak border control effort in order to stem the flow of illicit traffic and possible terrorists from Paraguay and Brazil, neither of which have secured their sides of the borders effectively. It is generally believed that the deadly bombers crossed into Argentina from Paraguay. To date no anti-terrorist measures have been taken by Brazil and Paraguay.

Significantly, prospects for technological change to improve security in Argentina are bleak because of the precarious economic situation of the country now defined by 18.6 percent unemployment. The economic situation is stimulating public protests. On the positive side, the Argentine government has been issuing new "fraud-proof" passports. These are welcome steps to tighten surveillance and begin to track the movement of terrorists, gun-runners and drug traffickers.

The two investigations' inability to find the culprits does not surprise many Argentines. Judge Galeano has worked tirelessly with a small staff and volunteer efforts in a difficult landscape. He has been working closely with the Jewish community including B'nai B'rith, and DAIA president Ruben Beraja, an eloquent spokesman and frequent critic of the government's failings in the pursuit of the case. The United States, Israel and other countries have offered technical advice and aid. Perhaps a merger of the two investigations would make sense since it requires the full-time attention that Judge Galeano and his staff of investigators now devote to the AMIA case.

With the third anniversary of the AMIA bombing upon us on July 19 and the five year mark for the Israeli embassy long passed, it is important for people inside and outside Argentina to remind the government in Buenos Aires that they remember the two terrorist attacks and that countless people still grieve over their losses. Justice will only be served when the culprits are brought to trial and convicted. The attack was no Jews alone, but on Argentina. If justice is not served, the people, already disgusted about corruption, will erupt like a volcano," according Jorge Burkman, executive director for B'nai B'rith in Argentina.

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AMIA TERRORIST BOMBING ANNIVERSARY

[Page: E1450]

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

in the House of Representatives

THURSDAY, JULY 17, 1997

- Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, this week is the third anniversary of the terrible destructive AMIA terrorist bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This deadly international terrorist attack, directed at the very heart of the Jewish center of life in Argentina, took 86 lives, and wounded more than 300 innocents. It has badly shaken the confidence of the largest Jewish community in Latin America on the critical issue of their very safety and security.
- It is essential for the Argentine authorities, the U.S. Government, and the world community to do all we can both individually and collectively to bring to justice those who undertook this deadly and cowardly terrorist act.
- Hizballah, with its known links to Iran, and which our Government and others have indicated were responsible for this AMIA attack, is now clearly operating in our own hemisphere. We are all at risk. We must all work to insure that those responsible for this terrorist act are brought to justice and that the message is clearly sent that terrorism, no matter where or why, will not go unpunished by civilized society.
- Our International Relations Committee staff have visited Argentina in an effort to see what more the United States can do to help solve this terrorist bombing. Based on our staff inquiry, the committee asked that the State Department, which runs a very effective international terrorist rewards program, have its experts visit Argentina and offer assistance. We now have offered to help the Argentine authorities develop a meaningful and effective publicity program for their own already announced terrorist reward for help in solving this deadly AMIA attack.
- We anxiously await the further publication and distribution of additional material and efforts by Argentina to publicize the reward on the AMIA attack. As we know, our own reward efforts along these lines have played a critical role in solving or bringing to justice individuals from around the globe involved in international terrorist attacks directed at the United States.

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Justice Delayed

Three Years After the AMLA Bombing

Sergio Kiernan

Sergio Kiernan is an Argentine journalist specializing in international affairs. He has worked for a number of major magazines and newspapers in Argentina and Brazil. For the American Jewish Committee he wrote *Atrocity in Buenos Aires: The AMLA Bombing, One Year Later* (1995) and *Waiting for Justice: Two Years After the AMLA Bombing* (1996).

FOREWORD

Three years ago—on July 18, 1994—the AMIA building in Buenos Aires, the hub of Jewish life in the Argentine capital, was destroyed by a bomb. Eighty-six people were killed and another 300 wounded. To this day, despite repeated assurances by the authorities that the perpetrators will be apprehended and punished, the crime has not been solved. And this most devastating attack on a Diaspora Jewish community since the Holocaust must not be viewed in isolation: In 1992, the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires was bombed.

The American Jewish Committee, which has maintained close relations with the Jewish community of Argentina for over half a century, has followed the course of events with great concern. As soon as it learned of the AMIA bombing, AJC sent a delegation to Buenos Aires to express solidarity with Argentine Jews and to impress on government officials the need for a prompt and effective investigation. Since then, as one false lead followed another and no one has been convicted, we have met often with high-level Argentine leaders to reinforce the message that American Jewry will not remain silent so long as this crime against humanity remains unsolved.

We also determined to publish and distribute regular reports on the progress (or lack of progress) of the investigation. Two weeks after the bombing AJC released *Why Argentina? The Political and Sociological Context of the AMLA Bombing*, by Professor Carlos H. Waisman. On the first anniversary of the tragedy we put out *Atrocity in Buenos Aires: The AMLA Bombing, One Year Later*, and, on the second anniversary, *Waiting for Justice: Two Years After the AMLA Bombing*, both by the noted journalist Sergio Kiernan.

This publication, also by Mr. Kiernan, reviews the course of the investigation over the past year and the condition of the Jewish community in the wake of the bombing. The picture is not encouraging. But we owe it to the innocent victims to keep world attention on this case until justice is done.

Jason F. Isaacson
Director, Government and International Affairs
The American Jewish Committee

JUSTICE DELAYED

Three Years After the AMIA Bombing

At 9:50 on the morning of July 18, 1994, a powerful explosion destroyed the seven-story building that housed the Argentine-Israelite Mutual Aid Association (AMIA). The attack killed 86 and wounded 300 in the building, in neighboring residences, and in the busy street. It was the worst anti-Semitic attack against a Diaspora community since the Holocaust, and the worst terrorist act in Argentine history. President Carlos Menem promised that his government would do "everything that can be done" to find and punish the culprits.

Three years after the bombing and the presidential promise, investigators have precious little to show. In the words of a source privy to the investigation, "we know what happened a few days before the bombing, and we know there was an explosion . . . then the trail goes completely cold." Officials have, however, established beyond doubt that Argentine policemen were deeply involved at least in the first stages of the conspiracy.

Shortly after the attack, Federal Judge Juan José Galeano, who was put in charge of the case, arrested Carlos Telleldín, a petty thief, part-time pimp, and stolen-car dealer, and charged him with selling the Renault Trafic van used as a car bomb. The judge wanted to uncover the trail of the van and identify the buyers. But it took two years just to get Telleldín to confess that he had turned the van over to policemen.

Today, eleven Buenos Aires province police officers and agents are in prison charged with conspiracy in the case. Their arrests began to reveal a network of corruption and violence among policemen that has scandalized Argentines and forced their government to act. A major purge of the police force has already cost hundreds of officers their jobs.

The discovery of a connection between law-enforcement agents and terrorism confirmed what many Argentines strongly suspected. Obstacles to the investigation of the AMIA bombing start at the very agencies charged with uncovering the truth. And therefore uncovering the truth will necessitate a major institutional overhaul that goes way beyond the AMIA case.

THE POLICE CONNECTION

On Friday, July 12, 1996, Judge Galeano met for four hours with Commissioner Pedro Klodczyk, then chief of police for the Buenos Aires province. Afterward the judge ordered a special strike force to arrest four policemen. The next day ten more present and former police officers were arrested while Judge Galeano interrogated six more and, after hearing them, placed one under arrest. By Monday, the media were reporting that Galeano had destroyed a network of corrupt high-ranking police officers and was filing charges against them related to the AMIA bombing. The most prominent among the arrested was Juan José Ribelli, who headed the police force's grand auto theft division. A member of the police force council, he was described as the police chief's "right-hand man and confidant."

Piece by piece, the story of the corrupt policemen came to light. By early 1994 they were operating a racket that sold protection to criminals and traded in stolen goods taken from Lanus and Vicente Lopez, Buenos Aires suburbs. According to Judge Galeano, some of these corrupt policemen captured Telleldín in 1994 and sold him his freedom in exchange for a car, a motorcycle, and cash. Telleldín was simply one more victim of the officers' lucrative clandestine business. In early July of that year, soon before the bombing, Telleldín's premises were raided again, and one of his accomplices, Hugo Perez, was badly beaten by the police. In hiding, Telleldín negotiated freedom for Perez and himself. The price this time included a white Renault Trafic van.

Undiscovered and undisturbed, the officers continued their dealings after the bombing. Some were promoted and honored, most notably Ribelli, who rose in the ranks under the protection of his friend, police chief Klodczyk. He was even sent to the United States to take a course in antiterrorism techniques. The only cloud on the horizon was the indictment and dismissal of two inspectors who were exposed for selling protection. But neither revealed the names of any accomplices. It was not till Telleldín, the weakest link in the chain, broke down after two years in jail that the system of corruption started to unravel.

But the officers under arrest have proven more stubborn than Telleldín. Only a warning from the governor of the province that their silence would make him fire them all prompted them to make a statement. But all they would say was that they were innocent. These men still refuse to answer questions or acknowledge any criminal involvement.

The arrest of so prominent a group of officers triggered a crisis in the police force. Several of the men's colleagues on the force expressed public support for them and even delivered subtle threats to the judge, the prosecutors, and court clerks. And families of the arrested policemen have received anonymous phone calls telling them to make sure that their relatives keep quiet.

But Judge Galeano has remained unmoved. On the last day of July 1996, he indicted four of the arrested officers for extortion, kidnapping, and conspiracy related to the AMIA bombing. He also slapped a \$2-million lien on their assets and said they could face life in jail. Eleven other policemen were indicted for unrelated crimes uncovered during the AMIA probe. A few days later, the judge called upon the police to "step up their investigation to find out who received the van from these policemen." He later explained that he had given the provincial police "substantial evidence" to help them launch a probe.

But there was no probe. Instead, there was increased pressure on the families of the arrested officers. A witness for the prosecution had his small shop raided by people who did not steal anything but just put a gun to his head. Another prosecution witness barely rescued his young wife from a trio of kidnappers who tried to force her into a car in broad daylight. Both of these witnesses had been under the custody of Buenos Aires policemen. Hundreds of anonymous leaflets were sent to police precincts all over Buenos Aires saying: "Three thousand years ago, the Jewish people started creating scapegoats. They sinned and killed the scapegoat in special ceremonies. Today the Buenos Aires police are the scapegoat." The leaflet charged that the bomb that destroyed the AMIA building had actually come in the mail from the Jewish community of Cordoba "and exploded by accident on the fourth floor of the building." And it accused the Buenos Aires provincial governor of being a major drug dealer who had "sold out to the Jews." Police chief Kłodczyk's promise to find the authors of the leaflet has not been kept.

In early November, arrested officers who were supposed to have been held incommunicado were found to have used cellular phones. Recordings of the calls showed that these officers had shared information and encouraged each other not to talk to investigators. The silence continues today. The most important piece of evidence in the AMIA case—who bought the van from the police—is unknown.

THE PURGE OF THE POLICE

The governor of Buenos Aires province is Eduardo Duhalde. Planning to run

for president in 1999, he knows that tolerating a corrupt police force could jeopardize his chances. So in September 1996 he fired police chief Klodczyk and replace him with Adolfo Hugo Vitelli, known as tough and honest, and famous on the force for not being rich. Vitelli's promotion meant that eight other commissioners who were his seniors were forcibly retired. Intent on cleaning up the force, Vitelli fired 100 agents. And in late November, Governor Duhalde announced that all members of the force were now "on disponibilidad," a disciplinary status allowing the authorities to dismiss any of them at will. Duhalde also fired nine commissioners and five division heads, and, in a friendly gesture to Judge Galeano, he formally dismissed all the officers arrested in relation to the AMIA case.

Unfortunately, the public perception that something was being done to clean up the Buenos Aires police was dashed by a murder case in January 1997. José Luis Cabezas, a well-known photographer, was found burned alive in a car. He had also been handcuffed, tortured, and shot twice. The ensuing investigation led to new revelations of police corruption and violence, the threat of a police strike, and the dismissal of more officers.¹

GOING AFTER THE JUDGE

The AMIA case took an unexpected turn this past March when former Commissioner Ribelli, the highest-ranking of the arrested officers, hired a high-profile young lawyer, Mariano Cuneo Libarona. In April, Ribelli asked for an interview with Judge Galeano. The prisoner arrived with a small parcel containing a "present" for the judge. It was a videocassette. Ribelli made it clear that he wanted the judge to view the contents of the video and then, "only then," consider his legal situation. "Watch it alone, sir, don't let anybody see it, not even your family," Ribelli told the judge. After sending the prisoner back to his cell, the judge watched the video in amazement. On the tape was a cleverly edited copy of a recording the judge had made in late 1996 while interrogating Carlos Telleldín. (Galeano's clerks had, indeed, noticed that the original tape had been stolen.) The reason the judge had made the recording was that, during the interrogation, he told the suspect that he might qualify for a share of the \$3-million reward offered for information in the case. Galeano's team, anxious that there be no misunderstandings or misinterpretations, wanted everything on video.²

Judge Galeano immediately filed charges against Ribelli, but Cuneo Libarona, Ribelli's flamboyant lawyer, lost no time in notifying the media that he had a "very interesting" videotape which he had been "given" by unknown parties. Cuneo Libarona said that he himself was "scandalized" by the contents. He gave several copies to the press.

On April 5, the National Congress as well as every Jewish organization in the country issued statements backing Judge Galeano. "What Cuneo Libarona is trying to do is to smear Galeano," said Rubén Beraja, president of DAIA, the umbrella organization of Argentine Jews. "His technique is to scandalize, to degrade, to imply. He wants to sow suspicions around the figure of the judge, he wants to discredit him by suggesting that he is corrupt."³

The next day a TV station finally broadcast the famous tape, but it proved to be an anticlimax. There was an extremely poor image of Judge Galeano and Telleldín holding a barely intelligible conversation of half sentences, till the judge is heard telling the suspect that he may qualify to receive \$350,000 of the reward money.

What followed was farcical. On April 8, Judge Norberto Oyarbide, in charge of investigating the robbery of the tape, arrested Cuneo Libarona on the charge of extortion. The lawyer responded that he was being "set up just to prevent the truth about Galeano from being known." His client, Ribelli, then accused him of having stolen the tape from Galeano's office. When Judge Oyarbide was about to interrogate Cuneo Libarona, a clerk noticed that the interrogation questions had been stolen from the court computer. Investigation revealed that this had been done via modem, apparently from another computer in the same court building.

On May 4, Cuneo Libarona quit Ribelli's defense team. He was jailed for a month, and then released on bail. His videotape gambit had failed.

LIFE UNDER A PALL

"The external aspect of a Jewish institution used to be not any different from the Italian Club or the Portuguese Benevolent Society; security meant a doorman. Now . . . the other day I had to give a talk at a community institution and I couldn't remember the address. No problem. I found the place in no time thanks to the anti-car-bomb defenses and the blinding security lights."⁴ Rabbi Daniel Goldman of Congregation Bet El wrote this a year ago, and the situation had not changed since.

Since the bombing, "fire drills," a euphemism for evacuation rehearsals in case of attack, have become routine in Jewish schools. Older children still remember when classrooms looked out on the street, but, three years ago, pupils were moved to the back of the school buildings. Gone are the days of careless milling about at school doors; students must leave immediately after class, and adults who pick them up must identify themselves and sometimes

even sign a registry. Every teacher in a Jewish school must get to the classroom a few minutes early to make sure that everything looks normal, that there are no packages, nothing out of place.

Institutions that used to be welcoming, informal places are now grim, high-security fortresses. Unsmiling young men greet visitors with polite but precise questions: "Are you armed?" "May I see your bag?" "Who did you say is expecting you?" Only the very elderly are spared the grilling—unless they are carrying packages. Everybody knows that the anti-car-bomb defenses that mark every Jewish building constitute the ultimate no-parking zone. Even police cars keep away.

Every Monday, a small but faithful crowd gathers at the square across the street from the Argentine Supreme Court to mark one more week since the bombing. It is the Memoria Activa group, mostly relatives and friends of the victims. There are speeches of remembrance and indignation, an ongoing reminder to the government that the case is still not solved.

"The case is stalled," said Diana Malamud, who lost her husband in the bombing. "After arresting the policemen, there was no progress. I doubt very much if Judge Galeano can keep them in jail. There is not much evidence." Laura Ginsberg, who also lost her husband in the explosion, fears "that they want to nail the policemen with the whole case and forget it. Or it might be a convenient Iranian. You know, this case makes too many problems for the government, the cops, the intelligence agents. . . ."⁵ Both Malamud and Ginsberg—as well as others in Memoria Activa—have attained unwelcome publicity from their activities. There have been numerous insults, slurs, and threats.

Malamud delivered a sharp attack on the Argentine system of justice last year to a large crowd gathered to mark the second anniversary of the bombing. There was much applause. Scheduled to speak next, DAIA president Rubén Beraja abandoned his prepared text and spoke extemporaneously. He acknowledged the frustration of the community at the slow pace of the investigation, but urged the Jews "to support and uphold the law, to keep dialogue open so this situation does not degenerate into a free-for-all fight. We must stay united, the victims and the government, to win this fight."

Two days later, July 20, Malamud noticed she was being followed by a young couple driving a white Peugeot 504. She called Judge Galeano and was provided police protection. The next day, agents of the federal police met with her and said that the couple in the car were police assigned to protect her.

"We received a call saying that somebody was going to kill you and blame us," she was told. The agents advised her not to sleep "outside federal jurisdiction" and to "stop making such strong remarks."

On August 19, 1996, sculptor Mirta Kupfermink unveiled her memorial to the victims at a well-attended ceremony. A small base of stone surrounded by hardwood slabs that bear the names of those killed, it was placed in the park facing the Supreme Court, the encounter point for Memoria Activa. In fact, some members of the City Council wanted to reject the site as a "provocation." Only after the matter hit the newspapers did the council agree to the location.

ARGENTINA ON PROBATION

The basic imperative of Argentine politics is maintaining the goodwill of the United States, and therefore Argentine leaders tend to speak more honestly in the United States than at home. While the standard answer to critical questions from the media or the Jewish community in Argentina is "we're doing our best," Argentine officials visiting the United States admit the shortcomings of the investigation.

Thus in a meeting with American Jewish Committee leaders in New York on September 25, 1996, that lasted almost an hour, Foreign Minister Guido di Tella was extremely forthcoming. He acknowledged his country's negative image in the eyes of world Jewry. Although Argentina had opened its files on Nazis, passed an antidiscrimination law, and demonstrated many other signs of goodwill toward Argentine Jews and Israel, di Tella recognized that the 1994 bombing and the terrorist destruction two years earlier of the Israeli embassy constituted a "roadblock" to better relations. "We feel ourselves on probation," di Tella said. Noting that President Menem himself was "displeased" with the lack of progress in the investigation, di Tella hoped that the arrest of the policemen might mark the beginning of a breakthrough in the case.

Foreign Minister di Tella is well aware of his country's negative image in the United States over the bombings. On March 13, 1997, the House of Representatives voted a concurrent resolution, agreed to by the Senate, criticizing Argentina for "not identifying and initiating prosecution of the perpetrators" of the two attacks. And the resolution urged the Argentine Supreme Court, in the interest of efficiency, to appoint a single judge to investigate the embassy and the AMIA bombings. So far, such steps have not been taken.

One Argentine official who seems especially sensitive to U.S. dissatisfaction is Eduardo Duhalde, provincial governor of Buenos Aires and all-but-declared candidate for president. Duhalde met with American Jewish leaders in New York on April 16, 1996. Duhalde disclaimed responsibility for the Israeli embassy and the AMIA bombings on the grounds that both had occurred in the city of Buenos Aires, a federal district, not in Buenos Aires province, and therefore were in the jurisdiction of the federal police, not Duhalde's provincial force. When Jacob Kovadloff, American Jewish Committee consultant on Latin America, pointed to the evidence that "Buenos Aires province police agents were involved in the planning of the AMIA bombing, if not in the actual attack," Duhalde responded that there was "no conclusive proof" of this. At this meeting, Duhalde was accompanied by a number of other provincial officials as well as by James Cheek, U.S. ambassador to Argentina. Cheek made a point of defending the Argentine investigation as "serious and trustworthy."

But as more information emerged about the involvement of the provincial police, Governor Duhalde made further gestures to indicate that he backed the investigation. In early June, after conducting a purge of police forces under his command, he held a well-publicized meeting with Judge Galeano and promised him "full support." He also sent the judge Excalibur Telephone Tracking software, a sophisticated computer program, donated by the FBI to Argentina, that had been used successfully to track phone calls in other cases. Duhalde also set up an elite police unit to help in the investigation.

Duhalde has also suggested another weapon to help Judge Galeano, a new law allowing judges to cut a deal with criminals who turn state's evidence. As the law stands now, Galeano has nothing to offer Telleldín or Ribelli that might induce them to confess and implicate others. Argentine vice president Carlos Ruckauf has also backed a change in this law.

But resistance to the reform has mounted steadily, and not just among those opposed to the Menem administration. Many Argentines do not trust their government to administer a system that would allow criminals to avoid punishment in exchange for information. Such a mechanism might easily be used to help public officials under investigation for corruption. Indeed, a recent poll showed that 90 percent of Argentines living in the Buenos Aires area had "little or no trust in the judiciary system," and an even higher percentage expressed distrust of the police."⁶

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Argentina remains a "soft target" for terrorism because it maintains very lax

security. Although a new kind of passport has been introduced that is harder to forge, and congress is considering legislation that would extend radar control to all air traffic, the country's borders are easy to cross, as complaints from customs officers, drug-enforcement agents, and antiterrorism experts attest. A frightening commentary on the quality of the intelligence capacity of Argentina is that the only translator of Iranian in the State Security Secretariat is an elderly former businessman who claims to know the language and had visited Tehran a few times years ago.

As for the local accomplices in the bombing, despite all the official insistence that Argentina would get to the bottom of the matter, the investigation is mired in the corruption and ineptitude of security agencies; the officers arrested by Judge Galeano have maintained their silence for more than a year.

Since no government likes to expose the faults of its own system, the Argentine government would prefer to close the case, if it could do so without adverse consequences abroad. That is why it is crucial for the American Jewish community to keep the pressure on, supporting the investigation and keeping Argentine officials on notice that this matter will not be allowed simply to fade away.

ENDNOTES

1. Eugenio Zaffaroni, "What Can Be Done with the Buenos Aires Province Police?" *Clarín*, Mar. 20, 1997.
2. This information was supplied by individuals close to the investigation who wish to remain anonymous.
3. *Clarín*, Apr. 5, 1997.
4. "Life Is Not What It Used to Be," *Clarín*, July 18, 1996.
5. Interviews with the author, June 2, 1997.
6. The poll was conducted during May 1994 by Guzman, Heredia y Asociados Research and Marketing. Fourteen-hundred persons were interviewed in the city and suburbs of Buenos Aires.

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The Jerusalem Report

SEPTEMBER 4, 1997

COVERING ISRAEL, THE MIDDLE EAST & THE JEWISH WORLD

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Memorandum from

WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

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October 8, 1997.

To: Israel Singer
From: Hella Moritz
Re: President Clinton's visit to Buenos Aires

Alfredo Neuburger called in response to the questions conveyed to us by Deborah Mohile of the Office of Public Liaison at the White House. His information:

- The official delegation which will meet with President Clinton is comprised of six people - Dr. Beraja and Oscar Hansman (of AMIA), plus four relatives of the bombing victims, two of who are also members of "Memoria Activa"
- Since "Memoria Activa" is represented on the official delegation, there seems no reason to approve a separate meeting with the President, particularly as the group might prove to be "uncontrollable"
- DAIA would have no problem with a representative of B'nai B'rith joining the delegation, but American Protocol said that six was the maximum number admitted to see the President
- Protocol also said that the President cannot accept a gift; their intention however is only to present him with a memento, a plaque or such, and this was approved
- The book to be signed is the guest book recovered from the ruins of AMIA; a few pages will be left blank, President Clinton will be the first to sign in the renewed book; proposal was OKed, and even considered a moving gesture.

Dr. Beraja and Neuburger are in constant touch with the Embassy, Charles Peacock being the coordinator for the presidential visit; through him they are also in contact with the Advance Team that is already in Buenos Aires.

Neuburger will be trying - at Dr. Beraja's suggestion - to phone Deborah Mohile direct.

FORWARD

October 24, 1997

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Embattled Argentine Jewry Getting Boost From Clinton

President Meets With AMIA Families, As Community Seethes at Menem

Hoenlein: Results Will Tell the Tale

By IRA STOLL
FORWARD STAFF

WASHINGTON — President Clinton's visit to Argentina is stepping up the pressure on President Menem to move more aggressively to find the terrorists behind two anti-Jewish bombings that killed a total of 115 people.

The visit — during which Mr. Clinton met with representatives of the Argentine Jewish community and with family members of the bombing victims — is also exposing internal disputes wracking Argentina's Jews in the aftermath of the bombings. Some Jewish activists there are urging an approach militantly critical of the Argentine government's response to the blasts, while others are in favor of more cooperation with the government.

The tensions came to a head during the hour-long meeting with President Clinton last Thursday at the Sheraton Hotel in Buenos Aires, where the American leader heard complaints from the victims' families about the lack of results in the investigations. Mr. Clinton promised to ask the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to provide information that may help solve the crimes, according to reports from the meeting. His mere willingness to meet with the Jews in Argentina sent a signal to the Argentine government, officials of Jewish organizations said. Eighty-six people were killed in the July 18, 1994 bombing of the Argentine-Israelite Mutual Aid Association, and 29 died in the March 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Argentina.

"This was a very significant meeting, and the president heard plenty," said the director of government and international affairs for the American Jewish Committee, Jason Isaacson. "He heard the anguish of the families. He heard the failures of the investigations in both bombings to produce any tangible results."

A Democrat from New York who
Please turn to Page 2

Clinton Trip Puts Pressure on Menem

Continued from Page 1

traveled with the president in Latin America and who attended the meeting with the Argentine Jews, Rep. Nydia Velazquez, said the families of the victims "shared with the president their frustration with the way that the investigation has been handled."

She said, "The president listened to them and he was very moved, I can tell you."

Ms. Velazquez said the president vowed in the meeting to ask the FBI to assist in the investigations. However, she added, "It's a very delicate situation here. The U.S. can't appear to be interfering with an investigation that has to be conducted by Argentinian officials."

The associate director for Latin American affairs at B'nai B'rith's Center for Public Policy, Richard Merren, said the divisions within the Jewish community emerged in full view at a rally on the third anniversary of the AMIA bombing, where the head of the Argentine Jewish community umbrella group, Ruben Beraja, was booed for refus-

ing to name the government officials that he had alleged were obstructing the investigation of the bombing. A Jew who serves as the interior minister in the Menem government was booed off the stage at the rally, Mr. Merren said.

"There was a lot of dissension in the Jewish community there about that," Mr. Merren said. "It was kind of ugly."

Mr. Beraja continues to play a key role in the matter. He attended the meeting with Mr. Clinton, and, a few days before Mr. Clinton arrived, he was called to President Menem's residence for his advice on how to handle the impending visit of the American president.

The special assistant to the president and senior director for inter-American affairs at the National Security Council, James Dobbins, told reporters in Argentina that Mr. Clinton told President Menem of "our continued concern and support for progress in these cases and our willingness to assist."

Mr. Dobbins said the slow pace of

the investigations can be ascribed partly to the structure of the Argentine criminal justice system. "We don't believe this has been a case of foot-dragging on the part of the Argentine government," Mr. Dobbins said. He added that the judge investigating the AMIA bombing has already been to Washington for meetings with the CIA and FBI, and that the judge will be having more meetings in Washington on the subject.

Asked if the Argentine government is dragging its feet on the case, the executive vice-chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Malcolm Hoenlein, said, "The answer is in the results." He said years have passed without the perpetrators of the bombing being brought to justice.

In the meantime, Mr. Merren said, a group called Memoria Activa is holding weekly vigils at the site of the AMIA bombing at the time when the blast went off, and a law is under consideration in the Argentine parliament to allow for plea bargaining. That law might allow criminal investigations to make more progress, he said.