

RELEASE IN PART

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FILE

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P.B.
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FROM	AmEmbassy BUENOS AIRES	CLASSIFICATION	CONFIDENTIAL
E.O. 11652:	GDS	CU 49	
TAGS:	SREF, AR		
SUBJECT:	<u>Refugees in Argentina</u>		
ACTION:	SecState WASHDC	IMMEDIATE	
Info:	USMission GENEVA	PRIORITY	
	AmEmbassy SANTIAGO	PRIORITY	
	AmEmbassy ASUNCION	PRIORITY	
	AmEmbassy LIMA	PRIORITY	
	AmEmbassy MONTEVIDEO	PRIORITY	
	CONFIDENTIAL BUENOS AIRES	3766	
Ref:	A) State 136607, B) State 137156		
	1. Our response to reftel A overlaps to considerable extent with septel in response to reftel B. They might well be read together.		
	2. UNHCR [REDACTED] (protect), in absence [REDACTED] gave us detailed report June 4 of refugee situation as seen by UNHCR. He spoke very frankly and asked that we respect his confidence; he should not be identified by name or position in any use made of this material.		
	[REDACTED] of Geneva UNHCR office was here until May 26. He did not make a very good impression on Embassy officials.		
	3. There are presently about 15,000 refugees in Argentina		

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
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Exemption(s) _____
Declassify: () In Part () In Full
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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Kathleen Allegrone, Senior Reviewer

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by UNHCR estimate. About 10,000 of these are Chileans, with Uruguayans dominating in remaining 5,000. Some 4,000 Chilean refugees have left Argentina by one means or another. Only about 2,000 of the total of 15,000 refugees have legal resident status in Argentina. UNHCR estimates that about 1,000 of the Chileans and 300 to 400 of the others could be considered to be in danger from the security forces or rightist extremists, either of Argentina or their native country. UNHCR is actively involved in trying to assist about 100 refugees detained by GOA who apparently will be allowed to leave if places abroad can be found for them. UNHCR is having great difficulty in finding places of refuge for those who wish to leave. In most desperate cases, of those in immediate danger, UN turns to Sweden, France, Holland and one or two LA countries which can be counted upon to respond with visas, but even these are increasingly reluctant to take refugees.

4. UNHCR does not find GOA helpful on refugee matters.

Indeed, refugees have learned that presentation of UNHCR credential to Argentine police is likely to result in even harsher treatment than normal when detained [redacted] was unable to obtain appointment with anyone of Ministerial rank when he was here. (He complained to us about shortage of funds.)

5. Matter of killings of prominent exile refugees is

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discussed in reftel B. In sum, we feel that it is possible but not proved that regional govts (or, more likely, elements in them) may be cooperating in elimination of certain prominent political refugees.

6. Matter of forcible repatriation of Chileans from Argentina to Chile was raised in State 116688, and replied to at length in Buenos Aires 3234. As pointed out there, GOA has given assurances that refugees will not be forced to return to own countries. However, definition of "refugee" may not be same for GOA as it is for UNHCR, and we (and Santiago) have impression that security forces of the two countries may well exchange some individual prisoners. Neither we nor UNHCR rep here have reason to conclude that there has been any great number of refugees thus returned. These comments apply to the situation of other groups such as the Uruguayan refugees, etc.

7. UNHCR has informed us that it is dealing at this moment with case of a Chilean held in GOA custody. GOA has agreed to permit this individual to leave Argentina under UNHCR auspices, and has given that organization ten days to find a destination, with warning that Chilean will be deported to Chile at end of that time if UN has not found a place for him to go. UN is not sure that threat is meant seriously; it may well be tactic of Argentine migration officials to pressure UN to find a refuge. UN would protest and appeal

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if such deportation imminent. Such expulsions from Argentina may now be legally accomplished for national security reasons under decree of GOA. We will wish to give careful advance thought to any USG criticism of use of this type of involuntary repatriation, as it was under that legislation (Law 21,259) that an Italian, a French, and a Chilean national were recently delivered involuntarily into our hands by the GOA (on narcotics charges).

8. We understand that there is growing concern and in some cases near panic among refugee groups living here as result of deaths of Michelini, Gutierrez, and Torres, and rumors of disappearances of other refugees. UNHCR expects increasing pressure for settlement abroad from the more prominent or militant members of the generally leftist groups, especially Chileans and Uruguayans.

9. UNHCR rep himself raised possibility of a US parole program for refugees from Argentina. He felt it would be a useful contribution to easing of situation, but that it would be unlikely to have much impact. He explained that he had observed operation of our parole program in Lima, and knew views of refugees there and here concerning it. Asking us to understand his personal sympathy for US, but his frankness as well, he said he felt our program was so restrictive and badly administered that it did little good. Refugees interviewed by some US immigration officers in

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Lima, not rpt not consular officers, quickly spread word that interviewers were hostile, regarded even "moderate" leftist activity as disqualifying, and insulted refugees. Subsequent applicants then minimized political involvement in Chile, or invented stories, in effort meet US standards, but often thereby left themselves in position of appearing to be only "economic" refugees and therefore also failing to qualify. UN rep thought we would get applications here only from rank and file refugees most of whom in no real danger in Argentina, while more politically active who are in danger either would not qualify for US parole or would disdain to go to US on political grounds. He said UNHCR would welcome a US program in any event, as it was becoming extremely difficult to find any haven for such refugees.

10. We believe on balance that eventual establishment of such a program might be useful in Argentina, if it included selected Argentine parolees as well as Chileans and other refugees. We do not share rather negative assessment of UN representative, and believe program could be implemented in such a way as to take advantage of experience gained in Chilean parole program. It would be a humanitarian gesture and might be welcomed by the GOA as way to reduce its burden of refugees. On other hand, it would be difficult to limit program to very restricted numbers contemplated in Chilean parole program when potential pool of applicants exceeds

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10,000 for non-Argentine refugees alone. Inherent restrictions of US immigration law and exclusion of "economic" refugees would be likely create same disappointment of expectations cited by UNHCR official. Program would also of course require establishment in Buenos Aires of TDY consular/ immigration group to run program, adding to our security problem.

11. There is not sufficient justification for a parole program yet, and there may not be in future. Despite concern over the attacks on such figures as Torres, we do not yet see a situation resembling that of Chile, where we understand that most applicants for parole are under GOC detention. Few potential applicants here are in custody. Only if situation becomes much worse, and only if program could include Argentines as well as foreign refugees, could we recommend implementation of a parole program here.


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