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January 12, 1988

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
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Dear Henry:

I have looked at the Martin Anderson piece in The Nation. He comes to a remarkable conclusion that you single-handedly could have "stopped the bloodbath" in Argentina from 1976 to 1982 -- the Carter years, primarily -- by a "firm" word to Guzzetti over breakfast in Santiago in the Summer of 1976.

1. Long as your shadow over world history may be, Anderson misjudges it. It is legend that the United States can work its will in Latin America by a word and a wave of the hand. What happened in Argentina was in fact the result of long history, a culture of violence, bitter hatred, an epidemic of radical kidnapping, bank robberies and murder, and a military persuaded of its own transcendental patriotic duty to flag and nation. The notion that any outsider -- even you -- could have staunched the flood by a word to the Foreign Minister in the Summer of 1976 may flatter our national natural ego. But it vastly misreads this country's capacity to control events 4000 miles away in Latin America, and in Argentina in particular. Yet Anderson's conclusion -- that you bear a moral responsibility for the killings -- stands on that narrow ground.

2. His evidence is nonexistent. The only source named by Anderson as a witness to your dealings with the Argentines is Hill. He is dead.

3. And he was certainly not at the alleged Guzzetti breakfast. No one who was there is quoted. What Hill said he evidently picked up in Argentina after the OAS meeting, and then retailed to someone in the new Carter Administration six months later. His story found

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its way into some memorandum. It is that memorandum that is the centerpiece of Anderson's account. Anderson does not tell us who wrote the memorandum. This hardly constitutes creditable evidence. It is old, quadruple hearsay, at least -- Guzzetti to Hill to unnamed Carter aide to Anderson. Every one of the witnesses had an axe to grind.

4. My recollection tells me that it was probably you, me and Guzzetti around the table, with perhaps an interpreter. My memory is certainly not that you gave anything like a "green light" to counter terrorist atrocities. The whole notion is shocking, and a world away from the reality of our efforts in Santiago.

5. In fact, you were in your most aggressive mood on human rights during the Santiago visit. You spoke out bluntly to Pinochet; your speech to the OAS itself -- a public document, which surely would have been weighed by Guzzetti -- was a forthright statement, and firmly planted the United States on the side of human rights protection.

6. Furthermore, there is no circumstantial evidence that you were giving the go-ahead to Argentine military brutality. As Anderson reports, Hill had already asked us at State for permission to raise hell with the junta on human rights and permission was granted. It is also true that my deputy, Hew Ryan, somehow in my absence, had talked with the Argentine Ambassador just before your OAS visit, and made our concern known in no uncertain terms; indeed, I recall today that Ryan, who was firmly in the human rights camp, had gone to the edge of propriety with the Ambassador. Anderson also reports (p.478) that Hill was himself passionately vigorous in pursuing human rights concerns in Buenos Aires for the last half of 1976, talking with everyone including the President. This is something of a surprise to me but at least we never sought to slow him down. He spoke for you. So it is hard to see how there could have been any doubts in Buenos Aires, even in June of 1976, about our attitude on human rights atrocities.

7. Hill never told us during the last six months of 1976, while he was working the human rights issue so energetically, that you had misled Guzzetti, or that the junta was under a dangerously misguided impression about

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your attitude. If he had concluded you had given a "green light" he certainly would have -- and should have -- said so sometime between June of 1976 and January 9, 1977, and not kept silent until the new Carter people arrived.

8. The anonymous, quadruple hearsay memorandum is pretty fishy. We would be wiser if we knew who in the new Carter team wrote it; there was no shortage of either naivete or anti-Kissinger animus in early 1977. So anyone hinting that you were soft on human rights got a hearing.

9. In the event, the memorandum says Hill arranged seven times for you to come to Argentina. Poppycock. You considered going, finally agreed once and then cancelled because of some supervening event -- a visit to Israel, I think -- then agreed again to go for a New Dialogue meeting only to have the second date cancelled by the Argentines themselves posturing a protest against US policy for the benefit of the other Latins.

10. In the end, Anderson contends that your -- at worst -- lack of a "firm word" at one meeting completely neutralized Hill's own noble efforts in the last half of 1976, Ryan's demarche, your own public rhetoric and -- most amazingly -- the all-out human rights efforts of the Carter Administration which began a bare six months later and went on for four solid years. It is, I suppose, a tribute to your reputation that you could accomplish more over eggs and bacon one morning in Santiago than all the other officials of the United States in the next four and a half years. Of such stuff are myths made. But in fact, from the perspective of this witness, there is nothing to it.

All regards,

William D. Rogers