

THE FATE OF FREEDOM ELSEWHERE

HUMAN RIGHTS AND U.S. COLD WAR POLICY
TOWARD ARGENTINA

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“HUMAN RIGHTS IS SUDDENLY CHIC”

The Rise of *The Movement*, 1970–1976

News of Olga Talamante's kidnapping reached her parents by telephone in mid-November 1974. The call, dialed by a friend in Azul, Argentina, to the elder Talamantes' residence in Salinas, California, was brief, the details agonizingly vague. There had been a gathering, a classic Argentine *asado*, a daylong barbecue held as a kind of *despedida* for Talamante as she prepared to return to the United States and pursue graduate studies. Late in the evening, as Talamante and a group of friends started to leave, an unidentified car pulled up to the curb, and a man identifying himself as a policeman demanded that they accompany him for questioning. When Talamante refused, the individual forced them into the vehicle at gunpoint. Olga Talamante's whereabouts, the caller concluded, along with that of a dozen others who had attended the *asado*, were unknown.¹

For *Don Lalo* and *Doña Cuca*, as Talamante's parents, Eduardo and Refugio, were known in the local Latino community, news of their daughter's disappearance came as a terrifying, debilitating shock. *What could be done?* Immigrants from Mexico, the Talamantes had raised Olga and her two brothers in an agricultural labor camp in Gilroy, California. For nearly a decade the family had lived in a single room with no furniture, stove, or refrigerator in an old warehouse that had been divided up among house laborers. From the long hours in the fields to the irregular pay to discourage worker transience, it was a hard, grinding existence rooted in exploitation emblematic of the immigrant experience in rural California. Having endured for years the weekly indignity of waiting in line with other farm laborers for the *patrones* to dispense a meager allotment of cash, the Talamantes felt the possibility of successfully lobbying on Olga's behalf, of

harnessing enough political leverage in Washington to influence the Argentine government—if, indeed, she was held captive by the state—was an endeavor of extraordinary magnitude.²

Yet Olga Talamante was no ordinary young woman. After spending roughly the first decade of her life in Mexico, she had accompanied her parents to the United States in 1961. Unable to speak English, Talamante was initially classified as mentally retarded by primary school officials, and placed in a classroom with younger students.³ After only one year, however, she had mastered the language sufficiently to move directly from fourth to sixth grade. In high school, Talamante's stellar performance in the classroom and participation in extracurricular activities set her apart from peers. She was elected president of her sophomore class, acted as both secretary and vice president of the honor society, led the local chapter of an international student exchange program, served as president of a student-run advisory council on school reform, and earned a letter in girls' hockey. Receiving the "Outstanding Student of the Year" award at her high school graduation, Talamante—whose parents had not completed elementary school—set her sights on a college education, and with the assistance of several academic scholarships she enrolled in the fall of 1969 at the University of California at Santa Cruz, where she majored in Latin American Studies.⁴

Talamante graduated from UC–Santa Cruz with honors in 1973, shortly after obtaining U.S. citizenship. She spent the summer working in the garlic fields of Gilroy until she had saved enough money to buy a plane ticket to Argentina, where she taught English and volunteered at a community center in Azul that offered basic social services such as legal aid and tutoring to the residents of a poor neighborhood.⁵ In early November 1974, with political violence in Argentina increasing, Talamante wrote her family that she had purchased a return plane ticket and would be coming home on the twenty-fourth. Eduardo and Refugio's daughter, however, never arrived.

The Talamantes immediately began working to ascertain what had happened, frantically contacting elected representatives in California and Washington, DC, as well as Olga's associates and friends in Gilroy and at UC–Santa Cruz. Initially, it seemed a fruitless endeavor since the Department of State could provide no information on Olga Talamante's case. Officers in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (ARA) dutifully contacted the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, however, and by the end of the month it was confirmed that Talamante had been arrested five days after President Isabel Perón had enacted "State of Siege" provisions—in which suspected subversives could be held indefinitely and without charges—to crack down on left-wing political violence. The U.S. Embassy further ascertained that Talamante was being held in a government prison in Azul for alleged possession of "subversive literature" and handguns,

and that she would remain in detention until the case was adjudicated by the Argentine justice system.⁶ Perhaps more important for her worried parents, a U.S. consular visit allowed Olga the chance to write her family. "What happened is that I have been arrested along with some friends, under the charge of having arms and of being in opposition to the government," Talamante wrote on November 27. She continued:

I don't know if you remember, Mama, of the times I wrote you telling you that here the young men and women that I know help people a lot, especially the humble people, those in need. That is why I tell you there is confusion, because none of us attempted to do more than this.

Mama, more than anything else what hurts me most is the pain I may have caused you and am causing you and Papa now. I would give anything to avoid this suffering, but the circumstances are not determined by us. I know that you will be strong and that together we will have faith in a rapid solution. You receive all my love. I love you very much.⁷

No doubt overjoyed to learn that their daughter was alive, Olga Talamante's parents also received word that their daughter had been tortured by members of the Argentine security services.

Recognizing that Olga's academic achievements and extracurricular activism had cultivated supporters in both the white and Latino communities, the Talamantes redoubled their efforts to generate support for her release. In early December they formed the Olga Talamante Defense Committee (OTDC) and began a grassroots campaign on her behalf, including vigils, letter-writing campaigns, and picket lines.⁸ In subsequent months, the Talamantes' unflinching dedication to securing Olga's release transformed the OTDC into a full-fledged social movement. With support from Ed McCaughan and Peter Baird, editors at the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), a left-wing, nonprofit organization dedicated to social justice in hemispheric affairs, the committee eventually cobbled together a broad coalition of support from a diverse range of organizations, including the United Farm Workers Union, the National Council of Churches, the United Auto Workers, and the National Women's Political Caucus.⁹ Although Talamante remained in prison throughout 1975, by mid-March, Norman Y. Mineta (D-CA)—House representative for the Talamantes' congressional district—informed the State Department, "It is rare that a day passes without an inquiry from a friend, relative, or school acquaintance regarding her trial's progress."¹⁰

The initial support garnered by the Olga Talamante Defense Committee was indicative of the widespread respect in Gilroy and at UC-Santa Cruz for Talamante's extraordinary success in overcoming linguistic, racial, and cultural

barriers. The immense outpouring of solidarity the OTDC eventually generated, among both the thousands of petition signers in the San Francisco Bay Area and religious, church, and labor groups nationwide, reflected the rising support for human rights in U.S. society and politics.¹¹ Rooted in the struggle for civil rights and the anti-Vietnam War movements and gaining strength thanks to widespread disillusionment with U.S. support for repressive regimes, the effort to institutionalize human rights in U.S. foreign policy and improve the protection of human rights overseas blossomed in the early 1970s. Put broadly, grassroots organizers, human rights lobbyists in Washington, and sympathetic members of Congress consciously embodied a countermovement to the maintenance of close U.S. political, economic, and military ties to staunchly anticommunist, authoritarian governments—a defining feature of U.S. Cold War policy, particularly toward Latin America. Over the course of the 1970s, in other words, the idealism of the blossoming human rights movement vied for primacy with the realist policy prescriptions that had undergirded U.S.-Latin American Cold War relations since the late 1940s.

As a result, as state-sanctioned violence in Argentina increased, the South American nation moved to the center of the struggle between idealism and realism in U.S. foreign policy. Human rights advocates played a central role in raising awareness of state-sanctioned violence in Argentina, and, following the 1976 coup d'état, in pressuring policymakers to distance the U.S. from the Argentine military junta. The successful 1978 congressional cutoff of U.S. security transfers to Argentina was a clear indication of the human rights movement's evolution; by the end of the decade, human rights advocates enjoyed support from a broad grassroots base, maintained an influential lobby in Washington, and had established a reputation for effective mobilization on behalf of human rights issues.

* * *

Although human rights language was written into the United Nations Charter in June 1945 and the international humanitarian law enshrined in the Geneva Conventions gained near-universal acceptance four years later, over the course of the subsequent quarter century human rights took a backseat in U.S. foreign policy to the perceived exigencies of the Cold War. Divided into ideologically charged voting blocs and unwilling to accept criticism, from its founding the UN Human Rights Commission openly abdicated the power to "take any action in regard to any complaints concerning human rights." As the historian Geoffrey Robertson writes, "The best that can be said for Cold War law was that superpowers felt obliged to resort to such fictions, covering up as best they could the atrocities committed by their own allies in order to accuse more loudly the other side."¹²

By the late 1960s, however, increasing disaffection with the rising costs of U.S. military intervention in Southeast Asia among both nongovernmental antiwar

advocates and their liberal allies in Congress stimulated a broad reevaluation of U.S. foreign policy. Latin America was widely seen as a particularly egregious illustration of the illiberal nature of U.S. Cold War policymaking. Less than a decade earlier, Kennedy's Alliance for Progress had cultivated enormous hope in the region for a flowering of representative democracy, enhanced internal security, and dynamic economic growth. Instead, by the late 1960s most of the region was ruled by U.S.-backed right-wing military regimes; as the former U.S. ambassador to Chile Ralph Dungan informed the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs in mid-1969, "The basic defect in the stability counterinsurgency tactic as perceived by the U.S. military is that somehow stability is an end in itself and that it matters little in whose hands or under what condition stability exists—or what means are used to obtain it."¹³

Dungan's assessment received a warm reception from the subcommittee chairman Frank Church (D-ID), who, along with the Foreign Relations Committee chairman J. William Fulbright (D-AK), had emerged in the final years of the decade as one of the most outspoken critics of the prominent role accorded to the Pentagon in U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, for more than a decade, Church had worked to place restrictions on U.S. military assistance programs, albeit with little success. "Against the combined opposition of the State Department, the Pentagon, and most often the White House, it is not easy to accomplish," the Idaho senator bluntly responded when Dungan suggested stopping assistance programs to Latin American militaries. The Washington bureaucracy, Church wearily concluded, "is like a hydraheaded monster."¹⁴

Church's effort to rein in the role of military assistance in U.S. foreign policy was by no means the only crack in the Washington Cold War consensus, particularly in regard to Latin America. During the Kennedy administration, Senator Wayne Morse (D-OR), Church's predecessor on the Senate subcommittee, had adamantly resisted White House efforts to repeal the congressional prohibition on military assistance to Latin America for internal security purposes, out of a conviction that "aid to nondemocratic Latin American regimes to assist the maintenance of internal security will be equivalent to the maintenance in power of harsh and repressive regimes."¹⁵ The following year, along with Fulbright, Morse expressed "great alarm" at the prospect of maintaining Alliance for Progress aid to Argentina following the Argentine military coup against Arturo Frondizi.¹⁶ Although by no means representative of the legislative branch as a whole, such resistance forced the Kennedy administration to justify its approach to hemispheric affairs—undercutting the lofty rhetoric of the Alliance for Progress. As Secretary of State Dean Rusk asserted in a letter to Morse in September 1962, "The Latin American military have in general been a force for good and have played a leading and often decisive role in unseating dictators and helping to maintain

Congressional resistance to the close maintenance of U.S.-Latin American military ties increased during the Johnson administration. Along with Senator Hubert Humphrey (D-MN), in 1964 Morse denounced the Mann Doctrine's shift away from democracy as a core U.S. policy goal in Latin America.¹⁸ More concretely, following the 1966 Argentine coup, Senator Jacob K. Javits (R-NY) rattled White House officials by proposing an addition to the foreign aid bill prohibiting Alliance for Progress aid to Latin American countries run by military regimes.¹⁹ The "mischievous amendment," in the words of the National Security Council staff member William G. Bowdler, threatened to put "the President personally and the U.S. government across a barrel." Foreshadowing future debates over human rights initiatives in U.S. foreign policy, Bowdler continued: "One thing is to tie aid to economic actions by the Latinos . . . which they understand even if they don't like it. Tying [sic] aid to internal political developments is quite another matter. The President by omission or commission will be passing personal judgment on each coup."²⁰ Although the bill failed to pass muster, in 1967 Congress succeeded in placing a "ceiling" of \$75 million on all arms grants or credit-term sales to Latin America (plus an additional \$12 million for training), denied a Pentagon naval request for Latin America, and extended the revolving fund used by the Department of Defense for arms sales for only one year.²¹

The groundswell of opposition to the Vietnam War intensified congressional efforts to limit U.S. military assistance and training programs. By the time Richard Nixon entered the Oval Office, such initiatives were receiving unprecedented scrutiny on Capitol Hill. "Do you have no question in your mind that something is wrong with our relations with most of Latin America except for your favorite dictators?" Fulbright demanded of the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs Charles A. Meyer during the 1969 Church subcommittee hearings on U.S. military programs in Latin America. "Mr. Duvalier is the only one who seems to be enthusiastic about you," Fulbright acidly concluded, referring to recent newspaper photos of the Haitian dictator and presidential envoy Nelson Rockefeller.²² A few minutes later, when G. Warren Nutter, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, described the amount of U.S. military assistance to Latin America as insignificant, Church responded by citing a study conducted for the subcommittee by the University of New Mexico professor Edwin L. Lieuwen, asserting that U.S. arms assistance supplemented the amount Latin American militaries spent on arms by "more than 50 percent, and by more than 90 percent in some of the smaller countries."²³

In his refusal to accept the shibboleths of U.S. Cold War foreign policy, Church challenged the Nixon administration to redefine U.S.-Latin American relations. Dismissing Rockefeller's recommendation for the maintenance of U.S. military assistance to the region in his 1969 *Report on the Americas*, Church instead

... and to bring home our military missions, end our grant-in-aid and

training programs, and sever the intimate connections we have sought to form with the Latin military establishments." Noting that U.S. arms had been utilized by both sides in the 1969 conflict between El Salvador and Honduras, Church told his Senate colleagues, "This is a shabby business for us to mix in."²⁴

With Church and Fulbright in the vanguard, during Nixon's first term in office the Congress took an increasingly active role in shaping U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, in the four-year period between 1968 and 1971, the Senate held an average of more than twenty roll call votes on defense bills each year—a dramatic increase from the previous decade's average of one vote every two years.²⁵ Moreover, successive congressional amendments placed increasingly stringent limits on U.S. security assistance, particularly the grant-based Military Assistance Program (MAP). In 1970, the Congress limited the number of military trainees brought to the United States under MAP to the number of foreign students studying in the United States during the previous fiscal year under the Hayes-Fulbright Act.²⁶ Two years later, the Congress successfully terminated the presence of U.S. military groups overseas unless specifically authorized by the Congress, and by 1974, MAP had declined to \$885 million from the \$1.2 billion earmarked for the program in 1967.²⁷

Seeking to maintain U.S. support for stable, anticommunist clients, in response to congressional restrictions on grant-in-aid military assistance Nixon significantly increased arms sales to U.S. allies abroad. Recognizing the relatively limited congressional oversight of the international arms trade, and aiming to offset a serious balance-of-payments problem, the president waived the Congress-imposed ceiling on arms transfers to Latin America and more than doubled arms sales to the region in fiscal year 1971 over the annual average of \$30 million during the previous decade.²⁸ Yet as evidence emerged of Nixon's secret expansion of the Vietnam War into Cambodia in the spring of 1970, opposition to what Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. famously referred to as the "imperial presidency" hardened.²⁹ The result, as Representative Robert F. Drinan (D-MA) declared in February 1971, was "a movement for a new Congress." "People sent me here to stop this war," Drinan asserted a few weeks after his election to the Ninety-Second Congress. "The essence of the whole movement for a new Congress is to restore the decency and the dignity of this House—to once again assert its constitutional power to declare war and to finance a war."³⁰

During a visit to South Vietnam in mid-1969, Drinan had been horrified by the extent of U.S.-sponsored violence and destruction. The experience, he told his congressional peers, "caused me to change the whole course of my life." As the first Roman Catholic priest elected as a voting member to the House of Representatives, Drinan's personal austerity—he resided in a simple dormitory in Washington with a group of fellow Jesuits—and fiercely liberal brand of politics

reportedly gained him the reputation in his native Massachusetts as "Our Father who art incongruous."³¹ Drinan's tenacious determination to halt U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia and to insert a heavy dose of morality into U.S. foreign policy as a whole, however, exemplified the increasingly widespread rejection of the Cold War consensus on Capitol Hill. In April 1972, Drinan described Nixon's decision to bomb the North Vietnamese cities of Hanoi and Haiphong as "tactically disastrous and unspeakably immoral," and in May 1973, Drinan and four colleagues initiated impeachment proceedings against Nixon for ordering the covert U.S. military operation in Cambodia.³² Although Drinan's impeachment effort failed, the Congress successfully passed the War Powers Resolution six months later, requiring congressional review of any attempt to deploy U.S. military forces overseas and providing the legislative branch with the authority to enact a troop withdrawal after deployment.³³ Praised by liberal supporters for his outspoken opposition to the Nixon administration, Drinan ruffled the feathers of cold warriors across the aisle. As the conservative Republican freshman Trent Lott (R-MI) griped to a journalist in mid-1973, "If he's a priest, I'm the Pope."³⁴

If liberals such as Drinan set their sights on halting the U.S. military intervention in Southeast Asia, their efforts nonetheless paved the way for rising support of human rights advocacy. On Capitol Hill, the increasing significance of human rights was clearly evident in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973. In a nonbinding "sense of Congress" declaration, legislators asserted that "the President should deny any economic or military assistance to the government of any foreign country which practices the internment or imprisonment of that country's citizens for political purposes." Additionally, Congress requested that Nixon encourage the recently installed Chilean military junta to protect the human rights of its citizens, and, more concretely, required that the foreign police training program operated by the Agency for International Development's Office of Public Safety (OPS) be shut down.³⁵

More significantly, human rights advocacy took a major step at the beginning of August 1973, when Representative Donald M. Fraser (D-MN) utilized his chairmanship of the House International Relations Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements to initiate an unprecedented series of hearings on the international protection of human rights.³⁶ In a four-month period, Fraser held fifteen hearings with more than forty witnesses, including U.S. government officials, Congress members, scholars, lawyers, and representatives from nongovernmental organizations.³⁷ The following March, Fraser published a landmark report on the hearings, *Human Rights in the World Community: A Call for U.S. Leadership*. Including twenty-nine specific recommendations for integrating human rights into U.S. foreign policy, Fraser notably called for the creation of a Department of State Bureau of Human Rights, as well as the assignment of a

human rights officer to each regional bureau in the State Department. Fraser also lobbied for annual human rights country reports, and emphasized the need to link U.S. foreign aid to human rights conditions.³⁶

Eventually conducting 150 hearings over five years on U.S. relations with governments across the globe, and involving more than five hundred witnesses, Fraser's subcommittee played a critical role in raising human rights awareness, integrating human rights NGOs into the policymaking process, and institutionalizing human rights in U.S. foreign policy. From the outset, the Fraser subcommittee hearings reflected a remarkable degree of coordination with the close-knit community of nongovernmental human rights advocates. Fraser aide John Salzberg—the primary author of *Human Rights in the World Community*—joined the congressman after serving as representative of the International Commission of Jurists at the United Nations.³⁹ Salzberg not only played a key role in situating Fraser's effort to make U.S. foreign policy consistent with the U.N. human rights covenants to which the United States was a signatory, but was also particularly influential in establishing a close working relationship with human rights-focused NGOs such as the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), a bridge organization linking Latin American solidarity groups, exiles, and human rights organizations with official Washington in the effort to raise awareness of human rights conditions in Latin America and influence U.S. policy toward the region.⁴⁰

Indeed, the Fraser subcommittee hearings provided an unprecedented venue for groups such as WOLA to advocate on behalf of human rights in Latin America. With direct access to John Salzberg, WOLA cofounder Rev. Joe Eldridge and his colleagues were able to recommend hearings as well as witnesses to give testimony, thus making a major contribution in the effort to raise awareness of the human rights situation in Latin American countries. Correspondingly, the hearings stimulated WOLA and its peer organizations to become increasingly effective at collecting, analyzing, and distributing reliable human rights data, both as a means to generate wider participation in the human rights movement and to lobby members of Congress, while also encouraging the creation of additional region- and country-specific human rights organizations. "Congress became the critical point that brought it all together," recalled Roberta Cohen, who served as executive director of the International League for Human Rights (ILHR) throughout the first half of the 1970s. The Fraser subcommittee, she continued, "brought together all the different groups that were interested," thus facilitating the establishment of new human rights organizations and increasing coordination among existing groups.⁴¹

Fraser's *Human Rights in the World Community* was also instrumental in setting the stage for an unprecedented wave of congressional human rights legislation. When the Nixon administration ignored a letter formally presented

by Fraser and signed by more than one hundred members of Congress warning that congressional approval of the president's foreign policy decisions would be contingent on the promotion of human rights, in November 1974 Fraser successfully introduced a "sense of Congress" amendment (section 502B) to the Foreign Assistance Act. Patterned on the UN language in *Human Rights in the World Community*, 502B explicitly linked human rights to U.S. security assistance, asserting that "except in extraordinary circumstances, the President shall substantially reduce or terminate security assistance to any government which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, including torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; prolonged detention without charges; or other flagrant denials of the right to life, liberty, and the security of the person."⁴² Although the non-binding nature of 502B, along with vague terminology such as "gross violations," quickly proved problematic, Fraser's amendment nonetheless provided a foundation for subsequent efforts to institutionalize human rights in U.S. foreign policy, which gained momentum in late 1974 following the immense popular outcry accompanying the Watergate scandal.⁴³

* * *

From the outset, congressional human rights initiatives were fiercely resisted by the Nixon and Ford administrations. With his close adherence to Realpolitik, Secretary of State Kissinger consistently downplayed human rights as a viable U.S. foreign policy goal, creating deep enmity between the White House and Capitol Hill. "Human Rights advocates in Congress accused the Administration of moving on human rights only in response to pressure," Kissinger recalled in his memoirs. "We, in turn, believed that Congress was reflecting single-issue ideological and political agendas, pushed to a point that the administration considered inimical to broader United States strategic or geopolitical interests, or oblivious to them." Reflecting on the issue more than two decades later, Kissinger conceded that "there was a measure of merit in both views."⁴⁴ In the mid-1970s, however, the secretary of state's near-total dismissal of human rights infuriated liberal members of Congress and their supporters. "To describe the relationship between Congress and the Executive Branch at that time as adversarial would be an understatement," one human rights advocate recalled years later. "It was an out and out war."⁴⁵

Indeed, notwithstanding the rising chorus of human rights advocates in the House and Senate, Kissinger repeatedly ignored internal proposals by the State Department Policy Planning Staff on how to integrate human rights more fully into foreign policy. More remarkably, despite a unanimous recommendation from the Department of Defense, the State Department Latin America Bureau, and the Politico-Military Staff, in 1974 Kissinger reportedly refused to consider cutting military grant aid to Latin America. The secretary of state also sidestepped

congressional requests the following year for human rights reports on individual countries receiving U.S. military assistance, sending instead a general report containing very little country-specific detail. The response, recalled one observer, was "sulfurous," with Senator Hubert Humphrey (D-MN) describing the document as "about as bland as swallowing a bucket of sawdust."⁴⁶

Seeking to maintain executive branch primacy in the formulation of foreign policy, Kissinger was particularly opposed to congressional legislation binding U.S. actions in the international arena to human rights considerations. The secretary of state was "diametrically opposed to the viewpoint of Congress," Donald Fraser told listeners in a 1976 speech, and congressional human rights legislation "has not been faithfully executed by the Department of State, principally because Secretary Kissinger does not accept the arguments for the legislation."⁴⁷ The tension between human rights advocates on Capitol Hill and the secretary of state was especially evident on December 5, 1974, when a small group of congressmen led by Fraser held a tense meeting with Kissinger over the role of human rights in U.S. foreign policy. Having repeatedly pressed the Department of State on the human rights issue in written correspondence in previous months, Fraser went straight to the point.⁴⁸ "Basically we feel it's very difficult to continue to support foreign assistance programs to governments which oppress their own people," the congressman bluntly told the secretary. "We feel that the United States should be putting stronger emphasis on human rights issues in countries around the world."⁴⁹

In response, Kissinger expressed a willingness to discuss human rights with Congress. Nonetheless, the secretary emphasized that "there are a number of problems." Quiet diplomatic discussions, Kissinger asserted, rather than congressional legislation, should constitute the core of U.S. human rights policy. "The thing that I'm most allergic to is the obligatory statutes," Kissinger declared. "I don't mind requirements for reports of periodic progress, but I feel very strongly that obligatory requirements are counterproductive." When Alan Cranston (D-CA) pressed Kissinger to discuss foreign aid, which the California senator described as frequently politically motivated, military focused, and "seem[ing] to serve the people who are already powerful," the secretary responded coldly. "This has been a very interesting session," he abruptly informed the assembled members of Congress. "Could we perhaps arrange a meeting again in late January?"⁵⁰

Ironically, Kissinger's refusal to mollify congressional concerns over human rights strengthened legislators' resolve to enact binding legislation. According to Rev. Eldridge, Donald Fraser believed Kissinger's opposition played a key role in the movement's success. "If Henry Kissinger had been a little less arrogant and a little less haughty vis-à-vis the Congress," Fraser asserted, "and a little more

willing to descend to the level of Congress he could have handed off all this legislation—it wouldn't have been legislation."⁵¹

Instead, by mid-decade, growing support for human rights in Congress forced a rearguard action in the State Department to head off further legislative action. In a classified memo summarizing a human rights meeting on September 12, 1974, the deputy secretary of state Robert Ingersoll informed Kissinger that "the general consensus, was that, if the Department did not place itself ahead of the curve on this issue, Congress would take the matter out of the Department's hands."⁵² Thus, despite Kissinger's antipathy toward the human rights initiative, the State Department named human rights officers to each of the five geographic bureaus, began requesting U.S. embassies in countries affected by congressional human rights legislation to prepare human rights reports, and, in 1975, established an Office of Humanitarian Affairs in the State Department with the career foreign service officer James M. Wilson at the helm.⁵³

Notwithstanding the Ford administration's tentative steps toward integrating human rights into the machinery of U.S. foreign policy, human rights advocates continued to press the issue. An amendment by Fraser in November 1975 added teeth to 502B, replacing the "sense of Congress" language with a legally binding stipulation denying U.S. security assistance to gross human rights violators. Although President Ford vetoed the foreign authorization bill in May 1976, human rights considerations nonetheless gained prominence in a watered-down version signed by the president in July.⁵⁴

More significantly, in September 1975 Representative Tom Harkin (D-IA) successfully offered an amendment to the International Development and Food Assistance section of the Foreign Assistance Act, stipulating that no U.S. aid be provided "to the government of any country which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of international recognized human rights," unless it could be shown that the aid would benefit the "poor and needy."⁵⁵ Particularly in Latin America, the Harkin Amendment, as the legislation quickly became known, inserted human rights considerations into nearly every foreign aid decision. As the Kissinger-appointed human rights coordinator James M. Wilson Jr. lamented to the secretary in an internal memo, "We will get no respite from the Harkin Amendment."⁵⁶

Like the broader human rights movement, despite Kissinger's resistance, the State Department could not ignore the Olga Talamante Defense Committee's intensive lobbying effort. In Washington, forced onto the defensive by the wave of human rights legislation on Capitol Hill, the secretary of state hoped to resolve human rights cases involving U.S. nationals as quickly and quietly as possible. Indeed, in a February 1975 cable to all U.S. embassies in Latin America, Kissinger directed U.S. ambassadors to give "Human Rights issues in Latin America,

especially with respect to [the] treatment of U.S. nationals, host country nationals and others, . . . a high priority in U.S. policy formulation and implementation." In particular, the secretary highlighted cases involving U.S. citizens imprisoned overseas. Emphasizing the need for consular officers to immediately seek access to U.S. nationals held under such conditions, Kissinger instructed U.S. Foreign Service officers to determine prisoners' physical and mental health, document evidence of mistreatment, and provide "appropriate humanitarian assistance," and recommended that U.S. nationals be advised of their rights under international law.⁵⁷

Underscoring the significance of the human rights movement in forcing the issue to the forefront of U.S. diplomacy, Kissinger further emphasized the need to respond quickly to human rights cases involving U.S. citizens to avoid unfavorable publicity. "Failure to act promptly in protection cases may not only endanger the rights of the American nationals involved but also can prove most detrimental to the Department's relations with the public, the information media and with the Congress." Finally, Kissinger warned that U.S. nationals alleging inadequate protection by the U.S. embassy could produce "explosive publicity." "Conversely," the secretary concluded, "quick and effective protection can be very helpful to all—the U.S. national, the Department and the field," and appended a transcript of a Fraser subcommittee hearing on human rights in Brazil, in which a U.S. national recently released from a Recife prison praised prompt U.S. diplomatic efforts on his behalf.⁵⁸

From the outset, however, the Talamante case failed to fit the pattern of consular assistance for U.S. nationals imprisoned overseas. Indeed, human rights advocates and their congressional allies also targeted the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, flooding ambassador Robert C. Hill with letters he described as "depicting Miss Talamante as being in a 'fascist' prison."⁵⁹ The embassy was heavily criticized by human rights advocates on Capitol Hill, notably the senators Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Alan Cranston (D-CA), for failing to meet with Talamante until December 4, 1974—nearly a month after her arrest. Such criticism was an unwelcome irritant for Ambassador Hill; Talamante, the ambassador reported to Washington, had made no effort to contact the embassy, and when news of her arrest finally reached the ambassador on November 25, it came from the young woman's supporters in California by way of human rights advocates in Washington. Piqued by the bad publicity, Hill nonetheless dispatched consular officers to visit Talamante in Azul—nearly two hundred miles from Buenos Aires—more than a dozen times over the course of 1975, and took up the case himself with the Argentine foreign minister. "I emphasized the need to resolve this case quickly by having Miss Talamante leave Argentina as soon as possible before this case poisoned the good relations between the United States and Argentina," Hill cabled Washington in July.⁶⁰

Once Talamante's case had been adjudicated, Hill hoped to secure the young woman's expulsion from Argentina regardless of the judge's ruling because of her status as a U.S. national. Conflicting reports on the case's progress, however, complicated the embassy's efforts. In September, Talamante and her codefendants were found guilty as charged and given a three-year prison sentence. Word subsequently reached the embassy that Talamante had initiated an appeal, then, a few days later, that she had dismissed her publicly appointed attorney. As congressional pressure on the State Department to secure Talamante's release continued unabated—in all, nearly three dozen members of Congress wrote the department on Talamante's behalf—in early October Secretary of State Kissinger signed off on a cable from the ARA Bureau chief William D. Rogers, instructing Ambassador Hill to "assume personal charge of this case in effort to obtain [the] earliest solution. . . . This will ensure that we are provided accurate and complete information on all pertinent developments as they occur in Talamante case."⁶¹

Frustrated by Talamante's seemingly erratic decision making and shocked by a threatening cable directed to him by one of Talamante's supporters, Hill reluctantly accepted responsibility for the case. In a meeting with the Argentine minister of interior on October 15, Hill reiterated the importance of Talamante's release, asserting that the young woman's expulsion would "avoid an orchestrated publicity campaign that could cause the GOA embarrassment if the Talamante case were allowed to become a *cause célèbre*."⁶² The following month, however, Hill's efforts were stymied by Talamante's decision to continue to appeal the case, thus making it impossible for her to leave Argentina until a verdict was handed down.⁶³

* * *

Olga Talamante's decision to maintain solidarity with her codefendants resulted in her continued incarceration for the duration of Isabel Perón's fraught presidency, which came to an abrupt end following the military coup on March 24, 1976. In a prepared statement broadcast over the radio the following evening, the three service chiefs solemnly declared the beginning of the National Reorganization Process. Promising to govern according to "clearly-defined standards" and fostering the "total observance of ethical and moral principles," the generals pledged harsh measures against subversives. "The armed forces have assumed control of the republic," the communiqué concluded. "And we want the entire country to understand the profound and unequivocal meaning of our actions so that the responsibility and the collective efforts accompanying this undertaking, which seeks the common good, will bring about, with the help of God, complete national recovery."⁶⁴

Within a matter of months, it would become clear that the coup dramatically accelerated the unprecedented state-sanctioned terror campaign against

perceived subversives carried out over the previous two years by right-wing paramilitary organizations and in the military's counterinsurgency campaign in Argentina's northern province of Tucumán. In the immediate aftermath of the military takeover, however, the Argentine military's effort to promote an image of protecting human rights, and, correspondingly, to cultivate U.S. support provided Ambassador Hill with a window of opportunity to resolve the Talamante case—the only known instance of a U.S. citizen incarcerated in Argentina at that time. The case had already dragged on for nearly a year and a half and—thanks to ongoing political pressure by the OTDC—threatened to sour the newly installed Argentine government's relationship with the United States.

Accordingly, only two days after the coup, a group of soldiers entered the cell occupied by the female political prisoners at the Azul prison. After an extensive search, the women were ordered to line up against a wall. "Who is the Talamante woman?" demanded one of the guards. "I stepped forward and identified myself," Talamante recalled years later. "The officer looked at me and spat out, 'So you're the one that Kissinger wants released.'"⁶⁵

Less than forty-eight hours later a Pan American Airways jetliner touched down in New York with a stunned Talamante on board. Welcomed by members of the Olga Talamante Defense Committee, she immediately boarded a flight to California, where she was greeted by a teeming throng of supporters and journalists. Three years after departing for Argentina, including sixteen months as a political prisoner, Talamante—the first foreign national to be expelled by the Argentine military junta—was finally reunited with her family.⁶⁶

The Talamantes' long-awaited reunion, however, would prove short-lived. For Olga, the suddenness of her release and the continued incarceration of close friends offered little peace of mind. Acutely aware of the extent of state-sanctioned violence in Argentina, Talamante felt incapable of remaining with her family in California. "Although we had always talked about how a political prisoner's first and foremost goal was to be free to continue doing political work and I knew that my comrades were cheering me on, I felt torn," Talamante would later recall. "Instead of relief, I felt like my heart had been split in two."⁶⁷

Indeed, Talamante's arrest, interrogation, and incarceration served as a grim capstone in her extraordinary process of intellectual development, rooted in her experiences as an immigrant in rural California. For Talamante, growing up in the labor camp and working for local whites created a foundational understanding of the deep-rooted disparities endemic in rural California. "During the winter I babysat for the ranchers," Talamante remembered, "so I was poignantly aware of how our 'homes' did not have heat in the winter or air conditioning in the summer, as theirs did. It was my first awareness of class differences, you might say."⁶⁸

As she passed through adolescence, Talamante's crude sense of racial and class inequalities developed into a nascent political consciousness. At the encouragement of her high school's only Latina teacher, in 1967 and 1968 Talamante attended an American Friends Service Committee summer program on nonviolence and civil disobedience, an experience that pushed her to situate the Latino experience within the broader context of civil rights activism in the late 1960s. "After hearing the description of the voter registration drives in the South," Talamante remembered, "I became convinced that if you wanted to effect change, you had to take action, you had to take a stand and be true to it."⁶⁹

Enrolling at the University of California—Santa Cruz in 1969, Talamante was immediately swept up in the intense outpouring of New Left political activism that characterized the late 1960s. For a budding activist, it was a dynamic, exhilarating, and frightening moment, with the anti-Vietnam War movement nearing its apogee, stirrings of second-wave feminism, and, particularly in California, an outburst of Latino and Chicano political activism. Talamante quickly became deeply involved with the *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Azatlán* (MeCHA), a Chicano student organization, and soon identified herself as a Chicana activist. She also served as a field organizer for the United Farm Workers (UFW) in the struggle to win higher wages for farm laborers working in the grape and lettuce industries, organizing picket lines, food drives, and awareness-raising events at UC—Santa Cruz. In the summer of 1973, having survived dangerous confrontations with thugs hired by teamsters, Talamante proudly introduced UFW leader César Chávez to a cheering crowd of more than one thousand people.⁷⁰ Such experiences instilled in Talamante a hard-nosed dedication to personal activism. "There was a growing realization on my part that if you are going to take action to create change, and you are going to take a stand, that's what you need to do if that's what you stand for," Talamante remembered, along with a recognition that, "there may be consequences and repercussions."⁷¹

Talamante's sense of political awareness expanded dramatically during a study-abroad program in Mexico during the summer of her junior year. Falling in with a pair of leftist Argentine documentary filmmakers and eventually traveling through much of Central America and Mexico, Talamante began to map her dedication to Chicana activism onto the broader pattern of hemispheric relations. After witnessing the repressive tactics of the Mexican security forces against left-wing activists, Talamante recalled feeling a sense of shock that "Mexicans in power are being just as brutal and just as repressive and just as autocratic as gringos were to *Mexicanos* in the U.S. So it doesn't only depend on the color of your skin and your origin, but it depends on who is in power."⁷² Underscoring her growing sense of a broad-based struggle that transcended traditional boundaries, upon returning to UC—Santa Cruz in the fall Talamante worked to establish

alliances between MeCHA and African American, Asian, and Native American student groups.⁷³

Reunited with her filmmaker friends in Buenos Aires in August 1973, Talamante was swept up in the heady sense of expectation felt by many young Peronists following the return to civilian government in 1973. In addition to teaching English, the twenty-four-year-old Talamante began volunteering at a community center in Azul that offered basic social services such as legal aid and tutoring to the residents of a poor neighborhood.⁷⁴ In the aftermath of Perón's harsh repudiation of the Juventud Peronista (Peronista Youth Movement) and the Montoneros in the Plaza De Mayo on May Day in 1974, however, Talamante's work at the center became increasingly difficult as municipal funding dried up and political violence on both ends of the political spectrum increased, a trend that accelerated in the chaotic aftermath of Perón's death on July 1, 1974.⁷⁵ By early November, with daily reports of terrorist killings and a military coup widely anticipated, Talamante made the decision to return to California.

Arrested only days before her departure, Talamante was taken to a police station and forced to stand with her hands against a wall for more than twelve hours before being hooded and deposited, hands bound, in a holding cell. "The burlap bag felt rough and scratchy against my cheek, but it also smelled earthy and deceptively comforting. Thick tape already covered my eyes, so the bag's only purpose was to frighten me," Talamante later recalled. "And it worked. I knew I had entered another dimension." Accused of participating in a left-wing terrorist attack on an Azul police station the previous week, Talamante was subsequently stripped, bound, and subjected to electroshock torture.⁷⁶

All I could do was scream. The terror came after. They are going to do it again, I thought. Someone shoved a pillow over my face to muffle my screams. I panicked. To survive, I must be able to breathe and scream.

After about the third time the electric current surged, I figured out a brilliant maneuver. Right before the hands holding the pillow pushed down again, I turned my head sideways and took a breath. The timing of this took complete focus. It was a project. New reasoning kicked in: As long as I could get the timing right, I would survive.⁷⁷

Talamante arrived at the Azul prison physically and mentally weak but lucky to be alive. There, in a twenty-by twenty-five-foot cell with human waste leaking down one wall from a broken sewer pipe, crowded with two dozen female political prisoners, Talamante underwent a further stage in her intellectual maturation. Guided by a sense of alienation from the U.S. government, Talamante refused to call the U.S. Embassy for assistance, relying instead on her family and friends to agitate on her behalf. Counseled by her cell mates, increasingly cognizant of the

unflagging efforts of her family and friends on her behalf in the United States, and witness to prisoners taken from their cells and never seen again, over subsequent months Talamante came to see her own experience as part of a far larger, transnational struggle. "I know that we are presently being punished for having the courage and determination to rise against the injustice and exploitation allowed by a system which feeds and survives on those things," she wrote to a supporter on January 29, 1975, "but I also know that your courage and hard work are the rewards of our efforts."⁷⁸ Her decision to maintain solidarity with her codefendants—baffling the harried U.S. ambassador—further embodied the culmination of a lifelong process of political radicalization. "At this moment I find myself surrounded by an acute sense of awareness," she wrote in mid-February. "I see everything around me in its full dimension, these walls in relation to centuries of exploitation, this bed in relation to the thousands of unknown graves, myself in relation to my countless hungry brothers and sisters. And I learn once more that my imprisonment is but a small part of this historical yearning for freedom."⁷⁹

Unexpectedly released from prison in March 1976, and acutely aware of the extent of state-sanctioned violence in Argentina, Talamante felt incapable of remaining with her family in California. Transforming the Olga Talamante Defense Committee into the Argentine Human Rights Commission (Comisión Argentina por Derechos Humanos [CADHU]), Talamante established an office in Washington, DC, and set out to draw on the OTDC's infrastructure to raise awareness in the United States of political conditions in Argentina and lobby policymakers to curtail U.S. military assistance to the Argentine junta.

* * *

Talamante's arrival in Washington corresponded with a heady moment in the development of the human rights movement. On Capitol Hill, senators such as Edward Kennedy and Alan Cranston and representatives such as Donald Fraser and Robert Drinan had made major advances in the effort to institutionalize human rights in U.S. foreign policy. Revealing the dramatic rise in human rights awareness since the outset of the decade, in September 1976, 102 incumbent members of the House and Senate and more than two dozen contenders in the upcoming congressional election signed a statement encouraging candidates for public office to promote human rights in U.S. foreign policy. More concretely, over the course of 1976 Congress significantly strengthened human rights legislation, cutting off bilateral U.S. security assistance to Uruguay and Chile, and, through the Humphrey-Cranston Amendment, replacing the nonbinding "sense of Congress" language in section 502B with a legal obligation that the executive terminate security aid to gross violators of internationally recognized human rights, and providing congressional legislators with the right to overrule the president. Similarly, section 301 of the International Security Assistance

and Arms Export Control Act of 1976 (PL 94-329) reiterated the restriction on security assistance to human rights violators, and also required the State Department to draw up human rights reports on every nation receiving U.S. security assistance.⁸⁰

Finally, throughout 1976, Fraser's wide-ranging subcommittee hearings continued to frustrate Washington bureaucrats unwilling to embrace the call for an infusion of morality in U.S. foreign policy. As one foreign service officer wrote in a memo in mid-July, "there are some hearings coming up . . . which will undoubtedly result in adverse publicity, possibly be embarrassing to Departmental officers who testify, and almost certainly will be the forerunner to adverse actions under the new Foreign Assistance Legislation."⁸¹ Raising the hackles of the foreign service, Fraser's subcommittee thus continued to serve as a key point on the expanding human rights spectrum. As one human rights advocate asserted during the hearings on Argentina the following month, "It seems to me that the kind of attention, whatever it is, that is attributed to human rights today is partly a result of the hearings of this very committee, [and] that it does indicate a sustained interest in this question, that it will be weighed throughout the policy process."⁸²

In addition to growing interest in human rights on Capitol Hill, by 1976 nongovernmental human rights advocacy had blossomed into a major political movement. Indeed, the 1970s witnessed a veritable explosion of newly formed nongovernmental human rights organizations. Consisting of perhaps one hundred organizations in the latter half of the decade, an "amorphous yet multifaceted aggregate" as one early study aptly put it, the movement ranged from faith-based groups (such as the National Council of Churches) to organizations dedicated to raising awareness (such as the Council on Hemispheric Affairs), as well as solidarity organizations advocating on behalf of particular nations, ranging from Chile to the Philippines.⁸³

On one level, internationally focused human rights groups in the United States worked to raise public awareness and generate popular opprobrium of repressive regimes overseas. Drawing from the playbook of the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, human rights groups utilizing the "populist" approach sought to elicit human rights improvements abroad through mass mobilization campaigns. Through petitions and letter-writing campaigns on behalf of political prisoners, they sought to shame the leaders of rogue nations into compliance with international norms. "We assumed that all governments wanted to be accepted in the family of civilized nations and that by publicizing information that was not generally known, we would bring the force of world opinion to bear on them," recalled Jeri Laber, who acquired a reputation as a hard-hitting human rights advocate in the early 1970s. "By shedding light on

hidden atrocities, we would make governments sensitive to the image they projected to the outside world," Labor continued. "Publicity was our primary tool."⁸⁴

On another level, a growing coterie of U.S. human rights groups focused their efforts entirely on influencing Washington's policymaking elite. In a novel "post-populist" approach that eschewed a mass base, human rights advocates focused their energies on lobbying for more stringent congressional control over foreign aid funding to halt U.S. support for human-rights-violating regimes. In turn, such efforts resulted in a close working relationship between the nongovernmental human rights community and sympathetic members of Congress. As Senator Kennedy informed a gathering of human rights advocates, "We are absolutely dependent on you for information. We are basically all generalists, and we depend upon you for information, for the trends, the movements, the opportunities for congressional action."⁸⁵

The surge of popular interest also dramatically affected the handful of longstanding human rights organizations such as the International League for Human Rights. Founded during the Second World War by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) director Roger Baldwin on the pattern of the French interwar International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, the ILHR's effort to implement internationally recognized human rights had languished in the postwar era.⁸⁶ At the dawn of the 1970s, the league consisted of a handful of dedicated advocates along with affiliations with more prominent civil liberties organizations, such as the ACLU and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Less than half a decade later, the ILHR executive director Roberta Cohen was nearly overwhelmed by a wave of human rights volunteers. "Having been in this tiny office where it was so hard to find anybody to pay any attention, in the course of several years suddenly I began getting telephone calls and walk-ins . . . from so many people, many of them prominent writers and scientists and publishers," recalled Cohen in a recent interview. In a matter of months, some fifty lawyers had offered pro bono assistance on human rights cases, making it possible for Cohen to establish a parallel organization, the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights.⁸⁷ "Human rights is suddenly *chic*," Cohen exuberantly told the *New York Times* in early 1977. "For years we were preachers, cockeyed idealists, or busybodies and now we are respectable."⁸⁸

A similar development was taking place at the U.S. affiliate of Amnesty International. Founded in 1961 by the British lawyer Peter Benenson as a one-year campaign on behalf of two political prisoners in Portugal, Amnesty had subsequently developed into a full-time voluntary human rights organization focusing on obtaining the release of international prisoners of conscience and using popular pressure to encourage governments to adhere to international standards

governing their treatment.⁸⁵ During the 1960s, however, Amnesty's global influence, as one journalist accurately put it, was "almost imperceptible."⁸⁶

The following decade, however, Amnesty International underwent an extraordinary transformation—a development most clearly evident in the United States. Between 1970 and 1976, membership with Amnesty International USA increased by an average of roughly ten thousand new members per year, and by mid-decade, AIUSA boasted offices in Washington, DC, New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, and was operating on an annual budget of nearly \$1 million.⁸⁷ "Our time has come," one research assistant told a journalist in December 1976. "The interest in Amnesty has just absolutely boomed."⁸⁸

In addition to facilitating grassroots human rights advocacy, Amnesty International also developed into an effective lobby for human rights legislation on Capitol Hill. In 1973, Amnesty's groundbreaking *Report on Torture* solidified the organization's credibility as a global human rights watchdog, and by mid-decade, not only were AI representatives serving as frequent participants in congressional hearings, but the organization was continuously feeding information to between forty and fifty members of Congress, thus significantly enhancing legislators' ability to pressure the State Department to fulfill the requirements of the growing body of human rights legislation.⁸⁹ Underscoring the impact Amnesty International achieved on the policymaking process, following the completion of the first round of State Department human rights reports on nations receiving U.S. security assistance, in an internal memo to U.S. embassies in Latin America, the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs Harry W. Shlaudeman noted the "high credibility Amnesty and others have with Congress" and requested that embassy personnel "go rather carefully through recent Amnesty and other reports and extract the references to individuals or specific legal situations (e.g. 'fair trials are not available')," and provide Washington updated information on each issue. Shlaudeman further requested that embassies maintain detailed chronologies of conversations, diplomatic representations, and programs on human rights. Underscoring Amnesty International's political influence, he concluded, "We simply have to establish—to congressional satisfaction—that we are paying detailed attention, . . . that we are familiar with what Amnesty and others are reporting and that we are active."⁹⁰

Since the March military coup, Amnesty International had kept a particularly close watch on the deteriorating human rights situation in Argentina. Over the course of the late spring and summer of 1976, grim reports of the military junta's campaign against perceived subversives had begun to filter into the United States media with increasing frequency. On May 11, Robert Cox, the courageous editor of the English-language *Buenos Aires Herald*, reported in the *Washington Post* that since the military coup, more than 204 persons had been killed in the

government's antiradical campaign (an estimate that would later prove far lower than the actual number slain by security forces).⁹⁵

A few weeks later Cox reported that lines were forming at the entrance to the Government House as early as one o'clock in the morning to receive appointments when the building opened six hours later to inquire into the fate of missing or detained relatives. "Most Argentines expected that the death squads would be abolished by the armed forces after the military takeover," Cox wrote, noting that the military had assumed control of all security forces, including the police. "But this has not happened. Bodies have continued to appear, although many are not reported because of press self-censorship and police secrecy."⁹⁶ In late June, the veteran *New York Times* reporter Juan de Onís reported that federal courts in Buenos Aires had received more than six hundred habeas corpus petitions since April 1, many for persons who had disappeared after being arrested by security forces.⁹⁷

Amnesty International's own coverage of Argentina corroborated the intrepid reporting of journalists like Cox and de Onís. Over the course of 1976, Amnesty published a series of press releases and short reports on human rights issues in Argentina including academic freedom, detained or missing refugees, and the number of political deaths reported in the international press since the military coup.⁹⁸ The scale of state-sanctioned violence against perceived subversives in the South American nation, however, inspired Amnesty to dramatically extend its reporting by taking the unprecedented step of organizing a "mission" to Argentina, with the explicit intention of documenting firsthand human rights violations committed by the Argentine military government.

Unwilling to risk the negative publicity a refusal would undoubtedly generate, the Argentine military government reluctantly accepted an AI delegation. On November 5, three dedicated human rights advocates arrived in Buenos Aires to conduct an eleven-day study: Amnesty International secretariat member Tricia Feeney, Lord Eric Avebury, and Rep. Robert F. Drinan. Quick to denounce Amnesty for intervening in their country's internal affairs, Argentine military officers were especially distrustful of Drinan, who had established himself in the House of Representatives as a fierce critic of Argentina's human rights situation. In fact, on July 2, Drinan had declared before Congress that "in recent months, right-wing 'death squads' have been murdering and terrorizing supposed leftists," a theme he reiterated the following month. In both instances, the Massachusetts congressman attempted to garner support for legislation to parole endangered South American refugees residing in Argentina into the United States.⁹⁹

From the moment the group arrived in Buenos Aires on November 5, 1976, it was subjected to intense surveillance by Argentine military and police forces. Nearly two dozen plainclothes police officers shadowed the mission at all times,

frequently detaining and questioning individuals with whom the delegation met. On the morning of November 15, the group received a desperate telephone call from the mother of twenty-five-year-old Josefa Martinez, a student who had gone missing after meeting with the AI group the previous evening in Córdoba. Martinez's disappearance, Drinan later wrote, "caused me anguish as if a member of my own family had met such a fate." Immediately alerting the U.S. Embassy, Drinan also made a personal appeal to the papal nuncio to intervene, and continued to advocate on Martinez's behalf after returning to Washington.¹⁰⁰ Like thousands of other Argentines swept up in what the *Buenos Aires Herald* editor Robert Cox plaintively described as a "terrible black night, that may well be getting blacker," Martinez failed to reappear.¹⁰¹

Despite the military's effort to deter cooperation with the Amnesty mission, more than one hundred Argentines met with the delegation to declare arrested or disappeared friends or relatives or to deliver personal testimony regarding violations of human rights at the hands of security service personnel. As a result, Amnesty's mission report, released in March 1977, revealed in unprecedented detail the extent of human rights violations in Argentina.¹⁰² Estimating that more than fifteen thousand Argentines had disappeared or been abducted since mid-1974, the report asserted that the Argentine government had "permitted widespread torture of political prisoners, and engaged in abductions of its own citizens."¹⁰³ Setting a remarkably high standard in human rights reporting, the ninety-two-page document, as the social scientist Lars Schoultz asserted in a pioneering study of human rights shortly thereafter, constituted a "masterpiece of the genre, possibly the most comprehensive public evidence ever assembled by a NGO on human rights violations by any Latin American government."¹⁰⁴ Solidifying Amnesty International's reputation as a reliable and courageous human rights watchdog, and underscoring the extraordinary rise in human rights awareness, nine months after the report's release Amnesty was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

* * *

Arriving in Washington with little more than a suitcase, Talamante and CADHU cofounder Gino Lofredo "scraped by"—staying with friends and relying on donations to rent a tiny office in Washington's relatively inexpensive Dupont Circle district. "We lived very, very meagerly," Talamante recalled in a 2008 interview.¹⁰⁵ Limited resources notwithstanding, Talamante quickly established CADHU as a leading voice among nongovernmental human rights organizations engaged in U.S.-Argentine relations. In addition to working closely with the Washington Office on Latin America, CADHU established close ties with other Latin American national solidarity committees including Brazil, Chile, Nicaragua, and Peru. Talamante also became an outspoken member of the Coalition for a New

Foreign and Military Policy, an umbrella organization with roots in the Vietnam War protest movement representing thirty-five religious, political, trade union, and human rights organizations.¹⁰⁶ Congressional lobbying, however, remained CADHU's primary mission. "The first thing we started doing was documenting what was happening," Talamante recalled. "We put together information packets and walked the halls of Congress."¹⁰⁷

It was a heady moment to be engaged in human rights work on Capitol Hill. By early 1977, the human rights movement had emerged as a defining feature on the U.S. political landscape. Indeed, it was a development most clearly evident in Jimmy Carter's electoral victory over the incumbent Ford administration. A Washington outsider, Carter had repeatedly emphasized the need for an infusion of morality in U.S. foreign policy during the campaign, and, underscoring how far human rights advocates had shifted the U.S. political debate since the outset of the decade, in his inauguration address Carter asserted that "our commitment to human rights must be absolute," and "there can be no nobler nor more ambitious task for America to undertake on this day of a new beginning than to help shape a just and peaceful world that is truly humane."¹⁰⁸ Cognizant of Carter's political inexperience and embrace of the human rights issue late in the presidential campaign, human rights advocates nonetheless welcomed the opportunity the new administration presented for dramatically accelerating the institutionalization of human rights in U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, in comparison with the Nixon and Ford administration's fierce resistance to human rights initiatives, the Carter team initially demonstrated a remarkable willingness to engage the nongovernmental human rights community. In early February 1977, for example, the International League for Human Rights convened a conference on implementing human rights in U.S. foreign policy at the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. More than fifty human rights experts attended—unmistakable evidence, the league director Jerome J. Shestack subsequently wrote Carter, "of the widespread support your advocacy is generating throughout the world."¹⁰⁹ Underscoring his support for human rights, after receiving a copy of the extensive report, Carter sent a handwritten letter of thanks and subsequently offered Shestack the position of U.S. delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Commission.¹¹⁰ Capturing the ebullient mood among human rights advocates, the ILHR *Annual Review* praised Carter's support and declared, "These are days of hope for human rights."¹¹¹

Similarly, congressional human rights supporters relished Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's recognition of human rights as a U.S. foreign policy goal, and his willingness to engage nongovernmental advocates. In April 1977, for example, the deputy secretary of state Warren Christopher emphasized the importance of meeting with members of the human rights community in an internal

memorandum to Vance. "Since there is an increasingly active, vocal, and influential human rights lobby operating on the Hill, the Department should complement its efforts with the Congress with efforts to meet and talk with representatives of the more important human rights organizations in town," Christopher wrote, emphasizing in particular WOLA, the National Catholic Conference, and the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy.¹¹² To be sure, human rights advocates quickly recognized that Secretary Vance's conception of the role of human rights in U.S. foreign policy was far from "absolute"; few, however, could deny the dramatic shift in congressional relations with the State Department. When a newly elected member of Congress asked Rep. Tom Harkin's opinion of Vance following a meeting between the secretary and a group of Congress members, the veteran human rights advocate responded drily, "You should have been here when Kissinger was Secretary of State." Kissinger, Harkin continued, "would never have come down here to meet with us," or "condescended to answer our questions, except in only the most general and non-committal way." Secretary Vance, Harkin concluded, "is indeed a breath of fresh air in that position."¹¹³

If the Carter administration's apparent interest in human rights in the opening months of 1977 raised hopes among human rights advocates, it did not stop nongovernmental groups from continuing to actively lobby liberal members of Congress to expand the existing body of human rights legislation. As the hemisphere's worst human rights violator, at the outset of the Carter presidency Argentina took center stage in the debate, and Olga Talamante became a leading voice in the effort to convince congressional lawmakers to curtail U.S. security transfers to the South American nation. As Talamante told participants at a symposium on U.S. foreign policy in April, "For the past 15 years the United States has explicitly supported the role of the Armed Forces in Argentina as in the rest of Latin America." Notwithstanding the Argentine military junta's "apparent strength, fervent anti-communism and identification with the United States," Talamante continued, "the current military regime in Argentina is actually deeply vulnerable, unstable and weak." Faced with an "embarrassing and undesirable ally," Talamante concluded, the United States "must have the courage to recognize its past mistakes and firmly disassociate itself from the Argentine Military."¹¹⁴

Human rights advocates were heartened by the Carter administration's February decision to reduce Foreign Military Sales (FMS) credits to Argentina for fiscal year 1978 from \$30 to \$15 million on human rights grounds. Although the Argentine military junta subsequently rejected the remaining FMS quota, the U.S. government reduction did not affect \$750,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET)—a credit program for foreign soldiers to train at U.S. military institutions—and Argentina retained access to U.S. government and commercial cash sales of military hardware.¹¹⁵ Accordingly, in the late spring

nongovernmental human rights advocates' lobbying efforts for a complete arms cutoff to Argentina intensified. "I visited office after office of every Senator or Representative for a period of three months," recalled Patricia Erb, a U.S. citizen who had survived abduction and torture by Argentine security forces in 1976.¹¹⁶ Similarly, capturing the sense of urgency that guided her efforts, in a three-page letter detailing the extreme brutality of the Argentine military government to Jimmy Carter in early June, Talamante quoted General Ibérico Saint Jean, the governor of Buenos Aires Province. "First we will kill all the subversives," the general had recently asserted, "then we will kill their collaborators; then . . . their sympathizers; then . . . those who remain indifferent; and, finally, we will kill those who are timid." In light of such brutality, President Carter, Talamante concluded, should "join the United States Congress on this issue and support its initiatives to terminate all forms of military aid to Argentina."¹¹⁷

The debate over U.S. policy toward Argentina culminated in September 1977. In deliberations over the Senate's military aid authorization bill, the staunch human rights supporter Edward Kennedy introduced an amendment cutting off all U.S. military and commercial sales to Argentina. With the support of Senator Church (D-ID), and strong backing in the House of Representatives—a similar proposal by Representative Gerry Studds (D-MA) had been defeated by a mere thirteen votes—the amendment appeared destined to pass.¹¹⁸ At the eleventh hour of negotiations, however, the Carter administration entered into the debate. Fearing the bill's passage would prevent the president from offering the Argentine military junta incentives for improvements in human rights, Carter asked Senator Hubert Humphrey to negotiate a postponement of the cutoff date. Incensed by Carter's apparent unwillingness to enforce tough human rights sanctions, Kennedy nonetheless pragmatically agreed to postpone the cutoff until September 30, 1978.¹¹⁹

In spite of the delayed implementation date, the successful passage of the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment constituted a defining moment in the effort to institutionalize human rights in U.S. foreign policy. The amendment, combined with broader congressional legislation binding U.S. foreign policy to human rights considerations, provided Patricia Derian—the Carter administration's newly installed assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs—with the ability to use delayed or denied transfer applications earmarked for the military junta in Buenos Aires as leverage to demand improvements in the protection of human rights. Indeed, by mid-1978, the Department of State had blocked an estimated \$800 million in U.S. transfers to Argentina on human rights grounds.¹²⁰ With the total cutoff mandated by the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment looming, the extensive backlog of U.S. sales to Argentina played an important role in convincing the military junta in mid-1978 to accept a formal visit by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Commission (IACHR) an



organ of the Organization of American States. In the months leading up to the September 1979 visit, state-sanctioned violence in Argentina decreased markedly as the military junta sought to avoid an embarrassingly negative report—disappearances dropped dramatically, prison conditions improved, and the government made unprecedented steps toward confronting the issue of the disappeared.¹²¹

More broadly, as the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment made clear, by 1978 the human rights movement could cite major achievements in promoting human rights in U.S. foreign policy. A countermovement to the maintenance of close U.S. ties to anticommunist, right-wing military regimes, since the late 1960s human rights advocates had worked to uproot the policy prescriptions that had undergirded U.S. Cold War policy over the previous quarter century. A decade later, nongovernmental human rights advocates and their sympathizers in Congress had created a strong grassroots base, established a powerful presence in Washington, and could effectively mobilize on behalf of human rights issues.

For Olga Talamante, in particular, the successful congressional cutoff was a defining triumph in her own fierce struggle to cast international opprobrium on the Argentine military junta. Having personally experienced the horrors of state-sanctioned violence in Argentina, Talamante had developed into a tenacious advocate on behalf of human rights, and following the successful passage of the arms cutoff, Talamante shifted from CADHU to a position with the American Friends Service Committee focusing on global human rights-related issues. Yet as state-sanctioned violence continued in Argentina, Talamante would find little peace of mind. Capturing the lasting imprint of her experiences in Argentina, in a poem inspired by the annual round-trip migration of swallows from Argentina to California, Talamante later wrote:

I, swallow,
my tears on the shores of a new ocean
I am no longer a swallow
I will not make the 6,000-mile trip
every other beat of my heart
I will no longer swallow my tears and smile unhappily
I will now cry happily in my sadness¹²²

Erb," ADP; DoS cable, BA 6097, September 17, 1976, subject: "W/W: Arrest of Patricia Ann Erb," ADP.

120. DoS cable, BA 6177, September 21, 1976, subject: "My Call on President Videla," ADP.

121. DoS cable, BA 3376, May 20, 1976, subject: "Welfare/Whereabouts AMCIT," ADP.

122. DoS cable, BA 3576, May 28, 1976, subject: "Demarche to Foreign Minister on Human Rights," ADP.

123. DoS memo of conversation, March 1977 [?], Patricia Derian and Robert C. Hill, U.S. Embassy BA, Derian Papers. To preserve the secrecy of her meeting with Ambassador Hill, Derian subsequently tore off the heading of this remarkable document. In a recent interview, Derian confirmed the date and substance of the meeting. In a separate interview, Fred Rondon confirmed that he drafted the document.

124. Italics mine. DoS memo of conversation, October 7, 1976, subject: "Secretary's Meeting with Argentine Foreign Minister Guzzetti," NSA, Electronic Briefing Book 104, Carlos Osorio, ed., <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB104/index.htm>.

125. Accordingly to Hill, in a meeting with Kissinger in August, the secretary of state personally related to Hill his June 1976 conversation with Guzzetti—particularly his decision to turn a blind eye to Argentine antisubversion activities. DoS memo of conversation, March 1977 [?], Patricia Derian and Robert C. Hill.

126. DoS cable, BA 6871, October 19, 1976, subject: "Foreign Minister Guzzetti Euphoric over Visit to United States," ADP. The following May, Guzzetti was bludgeoned and shot in the head by left-wing terrorists. The Argentine foreign minister miraculously survived thanks to brain surgery at Bethesda Naval Hospital. Along with two other Argentine military personnel maimed by terrorist attacks, Guzzetti recuperated in the United States.

127. Ibid.

128. Personal interview with Patricia Derian, March 3, 2008, Chapel Hill, NC.

129. For an alternative analysis that emphasizes Kissinger's unique foreign policy approach to the Third World, see Jeremy Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).

130. "Kissinger's 10-Yr Gap," *Buenos Aires Herald*, July 1978, box 3, folder 30, Hill Papers I. More than two decades later, Kissinger reiterated his limited interest and involvement in Argentina in his memoirs. "Though I met the foreign ministers frequently," he wrote, "it was not until I left government and Argentina had emerged from the Perón/military era that I became personally acquainted with Argentina and grew to love that exciting and sophisticated nation." Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 748.

131. Hill died of a heart attack on November 28, 1978. He was sixty-one years old. See "Robert C. Hill, Ex-Envoy, Dies at 61," *NYT*, November 29, 1978, B12.

132. Robert C. Hill, remarks, Pan-America Society of New York, June 28, 1977.

133. Robert C. Hill, "Argentina Today," keynote address, directors and guests of the Argentine-American Chamber of Commerce luncheon given in Hill's honor, June 28, 1977, Metropolitan Club, New York City.

134. DoS memo of conversation, March 1977 [?], Patricia Derian and Robert C. Hill.

135. *Firing Line*. PBS, January 31, 1977.

3. "HUMAN RIGHTS IS SUDDENLY CHIC"

1. Olga Talamante, official affidavit, state of California, October 12, 1976, ADP; Alan Eladio Gómez, "Feminism, Torture, and the Politics of *Chicanas*/Third World Solidarity: An Interview with Olga Talamante," *Radical Historical Review* no. 101 (2008): 171-172.

2. Details from the Talamantes' life from Suzie Dodd Thomas, "Dirty Wars: On the Unacceptability of Torture; A Conversation with Olga Talamante," *Social Justice* 33, no. 1 (2006): 108-109.

3. Carol Pogash, "Friends Remember Argentine Prisoner," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 5, 1975.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Talamante, official affidavit.
6. Congressional correspondence, Michael J. Harrington to Henry Kissinger, March 12, 1976, ADP.
7. Personal letter, Olga Talamante to her parents and brothers, November 27, 1974, box 10, folder 7, Lister Papers.
8. Thomas, "Dirty Wars," 118
9. *Ibid.*, 117. On NACLA's role in the Talamante case, see, for example, "Free Olga Talamante," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 9, no. 6 (September 1, 1975).
10. Official correspondence, Norman Y. Mineta to Robert C. Felder, March 12, 1975, box 10, folder 7, Lister Papers.
11. Since the late 1960s, the term "human rights" has been applied to diverse local, regional, and national movements advocating a wide-range of political, economic, and/or social and cultural issues. The elasticity of "human rights" was—and remains—both a strength and a weakness for human rights advocates. On the one hand, calls to promote human rights generated widespread support from a broad-based constituency and could be applied to a variety of local contexts. On the other hand, by the end of the 1970s, the use of "human rights" to describe struggles ranging from gay activism in California to opposition to Cuba's command economy denied the human rights movement a clearly defined agenda and prevented a tight organizational structure. "Human rights," in other words, meant different things to different groups at different times. For the sake of clarity, in this book the "human rights movement" refers to the effort to (a) elevate moral and ethical considerations in the formulation and implementation of U.S. foreign policy; and (b) promote the protection of human rights overseas. The term "human rights" defies a single definition in the historical context of the late 1960s and 1970s given the diverse political leanings of human rights advocates, but is broadly construed as (a) freedom from government violation of the integrity of the person; (b) economic and social rights, such as food, shelter, and education; and (c) civil and political rights.
12. Geoffrey Roberts, *Crimes against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice* (New York: New Press, 2006), 48–49. On the role of human rights in U.S. foreign policy in the early post-World War II period, see Borgwardt, *New Deal for the World*; Foote, "Cold War and Human Rights," 445–465; Glendon, *World Made New*; Lauren, *Evolution of International Human Rights*; Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights*.
13. United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, "United States Military Policies and Programs in Latin America," 91st Cong., 1st sess., June 24 and July 8, 1969, Committee Print (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 6.
14. *Ibid.*, 39.
15. DoS memo, deputy coordinator for foreign assistance (Bell) to Secretary of State Rusk, June 26, 1961, subject: "Proposed Presidential Determination under Section 105(b) (4) and 451(a) of the MSA of 1954, as amended, permitting the use of funds to furnish military assistance to Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Haiti," *FRUS, 1961–1963*, vol. 12.
16. Telecon, George W. Ball to Edwin Martin, March 29, 1962, 3:15 p.m., box 149, folder 2, Ball Papers.
17. Letter from Secretary of State Rusk to the chairman of the Subcommittee on American Republic Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Morse), Washington, September 15, 1962, *FRUS, 1961–1963*, vol. 12.

18. Telephone conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Thomas C. Mann, March 19, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, vol. 31, 28-29.
19. "Javits Asks Curb on Alliance Aid," *NYT*, July 18, 1966, 9.
20. WH memo, W.G. Bowdler to W.W. Rostow, October 14, 1966, box 1, folder: "5: Bowdler Memos," NSF, Name File, LBJL.
21. Benjamin Welles, "The Latin Military: A Dilemma for Washington," *NYT*, December 22, 1968. E5; James Sundquist, *The Decline and Resurgence of Congress* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1981), 245.
22. United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, "United States Military Policies and Programs in Latin America," 91st Cong., 1st sess., June 24 and July 8, 1969, Committee Print (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 6; A. D. Horne, "Military Aid to Latin America Is Backed by Administration," *WP*, July 9, 1969, B7.
23. United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, "United States Military Policies and Programs in Latin America," 91st Cong., 1st sess., June 24 and July 8, 1969, Committee Print (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 73.
24. Frank Church, "Toward a New Policy for Latin America," address to the U.S. Senate, April 10, 1970, box 29, folder 8, Lister Papers.
25. Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 179.
26. The amendment was section 510 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1970 (the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act). "From MAP to FMS: Security on a Cash Basis," *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report* 10, no. 1 (January 1976), 8.
27. The MAP figure included the transfer of excess defense articles. Child, *Unequal Alliance*, 211; "From MAP to FMS: Security on a Cash Basis," *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report* 10, no. 1 (January 1976), 8.
28. "From MAP to FMS," 9.
29. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973).
30. Robert F. Drinan, *Congressional Record*, February 4, 1971, 454.
31. "Tribute to Robert F. Drinan," *Congressional Record*, June 11, 1980, H4813. Rev. Gabriel Richard, also a Catholic priest, served in Congress from 1823-1825, but only as a nonvoting delegate from the Michigan Territory. Four years after Father Drinan's retirement, the Reverend Robert John Cornell (D-WI) served two terms in the House of Representatives. See "Robert Drinan Dies at 86: Pioneer as Lawmaker Priest," *NYT*, January 30, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/30/obituaries/30drinan.html>.
32. Robert F. Drinan, *Congressional Record*, April 17, 1972, 3175; Drinan, "Drinan versus Nixon," *Congressional Record*, May 8, 1973, E3016.
33. Cynthia J. Arnson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 9.
34. Kenneth E. Dalecki, "Cong. Drinan: Great Guy; 'Devil in Priest's Clothing,'" *Fitchburg Sentinel*, August 13, 1973, 15.
35. Jo Marie Griesgraber, "Implementation by the Carter Administration of Human Rights Legislation Affecting Latin America" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 1983), 37-38. Fearing an investigation of all OPS activities, the Ford administration shuttered the organization in 1974. See Huggins, *Political Policing*, 195.
36. Fraser's subcommittee was later renamed the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations.
37. George Lister, interview with *Radio Pacifica*, September 11, 1975, transcript, box 18, folder 22, Lister Papers.

38. U.S. Congress, *Human Rights in the World Community: A Call for U.S. Leadership*, a Report of the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 93rd Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1974).

39. Personal interview with John Salzberg, May 6, 2008, Washington, DC.

40. Personal interview with Rev. Joe Eldridge, May 4, 2008, Washington, DC.

41. Personal interview with Roberta Cohen, May 1, 2008, Washington, DC.

42. Quoted in Stephen B. Cohen, "Conditioning U.S. Security Assistance on Human Rights Practices," *Journal of International Law* 76 (1982): 251.

43. In the November 1974 congressional elections, seventy-five new Democrats joined the Ninety-Fourth Congress, the largest freshman class since 1948. Intent on enacting major legislative reform and expanding the power of Congress, the "Watergate Babies" embraced the nascent human rights legislation while working to cut Department of Defense expenditures. Accordingly, Congress increasingly attached country-specific legislation to military assistance authorization bills—an approach initiated the previous year—including limits on U.S. military aid to Turkey, Angola, South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Chile, and Indonesia. See Arnson, *Crossroads*, 9–10; Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 205; Cohen, "Conditioning U.S. Security Assistance on Human Rights Practices," 254.

44. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 755.

45. Roberta Cohen, "Integrating Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy: The History, the Challenges, and the Criteria for an Effective Policy," statement at the Foreign Service Institute, 2008, http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2008/04_human_rights_cohen.aspx.

46. James M. Wilson, "Diplomatic Theology: An Early Chronicle of Human Rights at State," undated, James M. Wilson Papers, box 1, folder: Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs—Wilson Memoir, GRFL.

47. Donald M. Fraser, address at the Human Rights Day Commemorative Conference, Chicago, December 9, 1976, box 149.C12.4F, folder: Don Fraser, Fraser Papers; congressional correspondence, Donald M. Fraser to Stephen Pflange, October 26, 1976, box 149.G.9.8F, folder: Human Rights 1976 [1], Fraser Papers.

48. In June Fraser apprised Kissinger of the recommendations in *Human Rights in the World Community*, and three months later he pointedly informed the State Department that he was "disturbed of our lack of responsiveness when governments commit gross violations of human rights." The following year, Fraser requested information from Kissinger on human rights cases in more than a dozen countries. Congressional correspondence, Donald M. Fraser to Henry A. Kissinger, June 27, 1974, box 149.G.13.7B, folder: Human Rights; and Fraser to William D. Rogers, September 13, 1974, box 149.G.13.8F, folder: Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on International Org. and Movements 1974, Fraser Papers. For Fraser's correspondence on specific countries, see Fraser to Kissinger, box 149.G.13.7B, folder: Human Rights; and Fraser to Kissinger, box 149.G.9.7B, folder: Human Rights, 1975 [1], Fraser Papers.

49. DoS memo of conversation, December 17, 1974, subject: "Human Rights," box 7, folder: Human Rights (D/HIA), Robinson Papers.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Personal interview with Rev. Joe Eldridge, May 4, 2008, Washington, DC.

52. Patrick Breslin, "Human Rights: Rhetoric or Action?" *WP*, February 27, 1977, 33.

53. John P. Salzberg, "A View from the Hill: U.S. Legislation and Human Rights," in *The Diplomacy of Human Rights*, ed. David D. Newsom (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 17.

54. Cohen, "Conditioning U.S. Security Assistance on Human Rights Practices," 252–253.

55. Clair Apodaca, *Understanding U.S. Human Rights Policy: A Paradoxical Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 40; "House Votes to Ban Foreign Aid for Human Rights Violations," *NYT*, September 11, 1975, 18.

56. DoS memo, J.M. Wilson to Henry Kissinger, October 1, 1976, subject: "D/HA Monthly Report," box 7, folder: Human Rights (D/HA), Robinson Papers.

57. DoS cable, State A-1285, secretary of state (Kissinger) to all ARA diplomatic posts, February 26, 1975, subject: "Human Rights and Protection of U.S. Nationals in Latin America," box 63, folder 25, Lister Papers.

58. *Ibid.*

59. DoS cable, BA 6870, U.S. Embassy BA (Hill) to secretary of state, October 15, 1975, ADP.

60. DoS cable, BA 4645, U.S. Embassy BA (Hill) to secretary of state, July 14, 1975, ADP.

61. DoS cable, State 239839, assistant secretary of state (Shlaudeman) to U.S. Embassy BA (Hill), October 8, 1975, ADP.

62. DoS cable, BA 6870.

63. Congressional correspondence, Robert J. McCloskey to Edward M. Kennedy, November 13, 1975, ADP.

64. "The Armed Forces' Decision to Assume the Direction of the State, 1976," reprinted in *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America*, 2nd ed., ed. Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 158-160.

65. Thomas, "Dirty Wars," 117.

66. *Ibid.*, 118. See also Joanne Omang, "Argentines Release Jailed American," *WP*, March 29, 1976, A17; "Freed American Tells of Torture in Argentine Jail," *NYT*, March 29, 1976, 9.

67. Thomas, "Dirty Wars," 118.

68. *Ibid.*, 108.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Pogash, "Friends Remember Argentine Prisoner."

71. Gómez, "Feminism, Torture, and the Politics of Chicana/Third World Solidarity," 165.

72. *Ibid.*, 164.

73. *Ibid.*, 166.

74. Talamante, official affidavit.

75. *Ibid.*

76. *Ibid.*

77. Olga Talamante, "Surviving to Tell the Tale of Torture," *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 2006, B17.

78. Olga Talamante, excerpt of personal correspondence reprinted in "Free Olga Talamante," *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report* 9, no. 6 (September 1975), 30.

79. *Ibid.*

80. Apodaca, *Understanding U.S. Human Rights Policy*, 39.

81. DoS memo, Don Tice to Charles W. Robinson, July 16, 1976, subject: "Fraser Human Rights Hearings," box 7, folder: Human Rights (D/HA), Robinson Papers.

82. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on International Organizations, *Human Rights in Argentina*, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., September 28-29, 1976, Committee Print (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976), 41.

83. Laurie S. Wiseberg and Harry M. Scoble, "Monitoring Human Rights Violations: The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations," in *Human Rights and American Foreign Policy*, ed. Donald P. Kommers and Gilbert D. Loescher (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 183-185.

84. Jeri Laber, *The Courage of Strangers: Coming of Age with the Human Rights Movement* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2002), 73-74.
85. *U.S. Policy on Human Rights in Latin America (Southern Cone): A Congressional Conference on Capital Hill* (New York: Fund for New Priorities in America, 1978), 81.
86. Memo, Roberta Cohen, undated, personal papers of Roberta Cohen, Washington, DC.
87. The Lawyers Committee was later renamed Human Rights First.
88. Kathleen Teitsch, "Human Rights Groups Are Riding a Wave of Popularity," *NYT*, February 28, 1977, 2.
89. Robert F. Drinan, *Cry of the Oppressed: The History and Hope of the Human Rights Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 153.
90. David B. Ottaway, "The Growing Lobby for Human Rights: Time for Action," *WP*, December 12, 1976, 31. On Amnesty's early history, see Tom Buchanan, "'The Truth Will Set You Free': The Making of Amnesty International," *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 4 (2002): 575-597; William Korey, *NGOs and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "A Curious Grapevine"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 159-169; Moyn, *Last Utopia*, 129-133.
91. Cmiel, "Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States," 1235.
92. Ottaway, "Growing Lobby for Human Rights," 31.
93. Amnesty International, *Report on Torture* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1973); Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 43.
94. DoS general correspondence, Harry W. Shlaudeman to all [?] U.S. embassies in Latin America, October 28, 1976, ADP.
95. Robert Cox, "Argentina: Despite New Rule, Nightmare of Violence Continues," *WP*, May 11, 1976, A3.
96. Robert Cox, "Argentines Spend Hours in Line to Learn the Fate of Arrested Kin," *WP*, May 31, 1976, A19.
97. Juan de Onis, "Argentina Fighting Both Leftist Subversion and Counterterrorism by Right," *NYT*, June 28, 1976, 12.
98. See, for example, Amnesty International, "List of Refugees Detained or Missing in Argentina," press release, June 17, 1976, ADP; AI, "List of Politically Motivated Deaths in Argentina between 3 January and 3 June 1976," press release, July 2, 1976, ADP; AI, "Attack on Academic Freedom in Argentina," report, September 6, 1976, ADP.
99. Robert F. Drinan, "Death Squads in Argentina Go Unchecked," *Congressional Record*, July 2, 1976, E 3780; Drinan, "Political Assassinations and Illegal Detentions Increase in Argentina," *Congressional Record*, August 25, 1976, H 9064.
100. Robert F. Drinan, "Religious and Political Repression in Argentina," *Commonweal*, February 18, 1977, 103.
101. DoS memo of conversation, December 5, 1976, ADP. In fact, at least three other individuals who had met with the AI group in Córdoba also disappeared shortly thereafter, a fact the U.S. Embassy apparently decided not to share with Representative Drinan. Exemplifying the decentralized nature of the Argentine antisubversive campaign, the victims were most likely kidnapped by security services operating independently of the Córdoba central military command. According to the Argentine Human Rights Working Group, an organ of the military government, Martinez was freed on December 10, 1976, a statement belied by Drinan's continued efforts on her behalf through early 1977. DoS cable, BA 7722, U.S. Embassy to secretary of state, November 26, 1976, ADP; DoS cable, BA 8039, U.S. Embassy to secretary of state, December 10, 1976, subject: "Josefa Martinez Freed; Letelier Sotomayor," ADP.
102. *Report of an Amnesty International Mission to Argentina, 6-15 November 1976* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1977).

103. "Statement of Congressman Robert F. Drinan upon Release of the Report of an Amnesty International Mission to Argentina," March 23, 1977, box 392, folder: Subject HR, ARG, Robert F. Drinan Papers, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, Boston, MA.
104. Lars Schoultz, *Human Rights and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 84.
105. Telephone interview with Olga Talamante, March 28, 2008.
106. Argentine Commission for Human Rights, press release, November 10, 1977, box 73, folder: Human Rights 12/76-11/77, OPLMC, JCL.
107. Telephone interview with Talamante.
108. Jimmy Carter, inaugural address, January 20, 1977, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/speeches/inaugadd.html>.
109. Jerome J. Shestack to Jimmy Carter, March 2, 1977, box: 4, folder: Foreign Policy and Human Rights, 1/77-3/77, OPLMC, JCL.
110. "I appreciate your organization's contribution to an area in which I have a deep, personal concern," Carter wrote Shestack. WH correspondence, Jimmy Carter to Jerome J. Shestack, March 9, 1977, box: 4, folder: Foreign Policy and Human Rights, 1/77-3/77, OPLMC, JCL. Shestack turned down the UN position in 1977 due to commitments in the nongovernmental sector. Offered the position again two years later, Shestack accepted and served as the U.S. delegate to the 1980 commission. See Guest, *Behind the Disappearances*, 190-191.
111. "Thanks in large measure to the initiatives of the President of the United States," the review asserted, "there is a new focus on the human rights of the world's peoples. The League rejoices in this development. For 35 years, we have worked in the barren soil with all too few champions to help." International League for Human Rights, *Annual Review, 1976-1977*. Underscoring the shift from the Nixon-Ford years, in its previous report the ILHR had dourly reported, "One surveys the human rights scene with a certain despair." International League for the Rights of Man, *Annual Review, 1974-1975*.
112. DoS memo, Warren Christopher to Cyrus Vance, April 14, 1977, subject: "U.S. Foreign Policy on Human Rights: A Status Report," box 2, folder: TL 4/1-4/15, Lake Papers.
113. Congressional official correspondence, Tom Harkin to Cyrus Vance, November 11, 1977, box 13, folder: Human Rights—Argentina I, Christopher Papers. Donald Fraser concurred with Harkin's assessment. Similarly, despite noting "a certain amount of ad hocery," "preachiness," and inconsistency in its application of the human rights policy, Fraser praised Carter's support for human rights in April 1977, and later described Carter's human rights policy as "the singular achievement of this administration." Congressional correspondence, Donald M. Fraser to Virgil C. Sullivan, April 1, 1977, box 151.H.3.6E, folder: Human Rights 1977 (4), Fraser Papers; Donald M. Fraser, testimony before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, August 2, 1979, box 152.K12.9B, folder: Human Rights, Fraser Papers.
114. Argentine Commission for Human Rights, "Statement Prepared for the International Symposium on Human Rights and American Foreign Policy, April 27-30, 1977, University of Notre Dame," box: 74, folder: Human Rights: Argentina and Chile 1/76-11/77, OPLMC, JCL.
115. Griesgraber, "Implementation by the Carter Administration of Human Rights Legislation Affecting Latin America," 71.
116. Patricia Erb, "A mis compañeros y compañeras les regalé mi voz," in *Testimonios de la solidaridad internacional* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto, 2007), 143.
117. Olga Talamante and Horacio D. Lofredo to Jimmy Carter, June 3, 1977, box 74, folder: Human Rights: Argentina and Chile 1/76-11/77, OPLMC, JCL.

118. Schoultz, *Human Rights and United States Policy toward Latin America*, 84.

119. Burton I. Kaufman and Scott Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 52.

120. DoS memo, John Bushnell to Patricia Derian, June 13, 1978, subject: "Commentary on Cutler-Hammer Letter," box 13, folder: Human Rights—Argentina III, Christopher Papers; Sandy Vogelgesang, *American Dream, Global Nightmare: The Dilemma of U.S. Human Rights Policy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), 220.

121. On this point, see, for example, DoS cable, BA 5172, U.S. Embassy (Castro) to secretary of state (Vance), June 26, 1979, subject: "Ambassador Discusses Human Rights with General Viola," ADP.

122. Quoted in Gómez, "Feminism, Torture, and the Politics of Chicana/Third World Solidarity," 119.

4. "TOTAL IMMERSION IN ALL THE HORRORS OF THE WORLD"

1. Patricia Derian, interview on "The Current," radio broadcast, March 24, 2006, Canadian Broadcasting Company, <http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/2006/200603/20060324.html>.

2. DoS memo of conversation, March 1977 [?], Patricia Derian and Robert C. Hill.

3. Personal interview with Patricia Derian, March 3, 2008, Chapel Hill, NC.

4. *Ibid.*; Karen De Witt, "Carter Aide in Argentina to Gauge Rights Impact," *WP*, March 31, 1977, 17.

5. DoS general correspondence, Fernando E. Rondon to Robert C. Hill, April 7, 1977, ADP.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. Derian subsequently divorced, remarrying in 1978 the Mississippi journalist and fellow civil rights activist Hodding Carter III. Carter served as Jimmy Carter's (no relation) assistant secretary of state for public affairs and spokesman for the Department of State.

9. Karen De Witt, "On-the-Job Human Rightist," *WP*, August 11, 1977, B1.

10. Patricia Derian, résumé, box 16, folder: Human Rights—Early Efforts, Christopher Papers.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Patricia Derian, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, March 12, 1996, transcript, FAOC, copy provided to the author by Patricia Derian.

13. Jere Nash and Andy Taggart, *Mississippi Politics: The Struggle for Power, 1976-2006* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 27.

14. Derian, interview by Kennedy.

15. In the 1968 election, Wallace's American Independent Party ticket won just under 10 million votes and carried five southern states. Other than his native Alabama, Wallace received more votes from Mississippi than any other state. Richard Pearson, "Former Ala. Gov. George C. Wallace Dies," *WP*, September 14, 1998, A1; Nash and Taggart, *Mississippi Politics*, 30-31.

16. Barbara Gamarekian, "Human Rights Spokeswoman," *NYT*, June 23, 1977, 43.

17. Patricia Derian, résumé.

18. Gamarekian, "Human Rights Spokeswoman."

19. Derian, interview by Kennedy.

20. Gamarekian, "Human Rights Spokeswoman."

21. Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Human Rights and the American Tradition," *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 3 (1978): 513.

22. The second presidential debate, Palace of Fine Arts Theater, San Francisco, October 6, 1976, transcript printed in Sidney Kraus, *The Great Debates: Carter vs. Ford, 1976*

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