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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Information Concerning the Disappearance of Two French Catholic Nuns

PARTICIPANTS: Sr. Tomas Ornstein, President Coca-Cola, S.A. Buenos Aires, Argentina

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

Goodwin Shapiro, Consul General American Embassy, Buenos Aires

Exemption(s): _____
Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full
() Classify as _____ () Extend as _____ () Downgrade to _____
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

DATE: January 16, 1978

PLACE: American Club Buenos Aires

1. In a conversation with Sr. Tomás Ornstein during lunch, I mentioned the interest of Ambassador Castro in obtaining further details, if possible, regarding the remarks which he (Sr. Ornstein) made to the Ambassador at a recent social gathering regarding the information he had obtained about the disappearance of two French Catholic nuns in Buenos Aires. He began by saying that two intelligence officers of the Argentine Army are employed by Coca-Cola on a part-time basis as plant security advisers, and they have done an excellent job in developing procedures for plant security for Coca-Cola, S.A. As they have been completely reliable informants in the past, Sr. Ornstein is inclined to believe what they told him regarding the nuns. He said that one of these officers "works on cases of people being held under the Poder Ejecutivo Nacional," and that when he discussed the matter of the nuns with the officers he asked, "Why be so stupid as to blame the Montoneros for taking the two into custody?" They replied that their colleagues took the nuns into custody because they were angry at the moderateness of the government and want sterner measures taken. They stated that their colleagues regard the order of nuns to which the two nuns belong as leftist. On this point, Sr. Ornstein informed me that one of his employees has a sister who is a member of that order of nuns and that she herself considers the order to be leftist. According to the two officers with whom Sr. Ornstein spoke, the nuns are being held in one of the SIDE places of detention.

2. Sr. Ornstein went on to say that he subsequently had dinner with General Jofre, Under Secretary of the Presidency, and asked him, jokingly, what he was going to do with the nuns. Jofre replied, "Isn't this a disaster?" According to Sr. Ornstein, Jofre implied that the Presidency is desperate because the intelligence officers have been given considerable latitude and now the government doesn't know how to stop them. The dilemma is how to release the nuns when the commander of the regiment in Buenos Aires announced that the nuns were in the hands of the Montoneros.

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