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U.S. Attitude Toward Militarists Shows Clear

To the everlasting credit of the professors at the Roman Catholic University of Buenos Aires, they have denounced the seizure and brutal suppression of the non-Catholic universities by the new military dictatorship of Gen. Juan Carlos Onganía.

The United States washed its hands of a former dictator, Juan Peron, when, among other things he harassed the self-governing universities, but the militarists who overthrew President Illia last month, have gone far beyond Peron's repressions.



All during Argentina's history, the autonomy of the secular universities, the traditional center of free speech and thought, has been inviolable. Not even Peron dared violate it. But the new regime, in the best Hitlerian way, has set out to smash the intellectual world, beginning with the educational centers.

The first step was for the new leader, Gen. Onganía, to appoint his brother-in-law, Enrique Green, a retired navy captain and notorious anti-Semite, to run the police force.

The second step was a police attack on the school campuses, where students and professors were severely beaten, storm trooper fashion, by cops yelling, "Run, you commie Jew S.O.B." Then the universities were closed down "to improve the level of scholarly life."

The police, however, did not shut down the Catholic universities, but the faculty of the church institutions has nevertheless had the courage to protest strongly against the Nazi-like attacks on the other schools.

The assault on the universities is only one item of the wholesale elimination of all democratic institutions in the country, including the federal and provincial legislatures, and the Supreme Court. Some of our indignant neighbors, like Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Ecuador, have condoned the new

government by refusing its recognition.

But what has the United States done? First, it promptly recognized the Onganía junta, and now it has responded to the attack on the universities, including the beating of an American professor, by a perfunctory "expression of concern," which is not to be confused with a formal protest.

The assistant secretary of state for Latin America, Lincoln Gordon, was then quoted as saying the crackdown had been justified because the schools harbored professional agitators. Just like the ones in the United States, no doubt, who go around protesting Vietnam.

When the official State Department spokesman was asked about this, he said the department "associated itself" with Gordon's remarks. After the remarks backfired, Gordon denied saying the attack was justified, but he still "lamented" that Argentine universities had become "asylums for gangsters or for professional students who have no interest in studies but only in subversive agitation." The official spokesman then announced that the department was switching its association to Gordon's cleaned-up version.

It is significant, however, that Gordon did not choose to deny saying that the circumstances "suggest that this police raid was an impulsive action, rather than a planned university reform." Subsequent events indicate it was just about as "impulsive" as a Hitler book-burning carnival.



It is all too clear what the official U.S. attitude toward military dictatorships has become since the death of John F. Kennedy. Gordon, while ambassador to Brazil, virtually led the cheering section when the militarists took over. Now, as boss of all Latin American affairs, he can extend this policy to the whole hemisphere. We deplore armed coups, but

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