Dear Mr. Secretary:

I think I should write you further concerning the Mexican position vis-a-vis the Argentine. I have before me a copy of Armour's telegram to the Department, No. 1437, of June 6, 6 p.m., in which he states that he thinks Padilla's suggestion that Argentina meet her responsibilities under the Rio Resolutions is impracticable as a preliminary to recognition of the present regime by the other American states. I think there is a possibility that Armour may have some apprehensions with regard to the Mexican position, and for that reason and in view of the importance of the matter, I think I should make the position clear.

In my secret letter of June 6, I wrote you at some length with regard to this, and I should appreciate my letter of June 6 to you being considered in connection with this letter. I should like to say at the outset that naturally there is a good deal of distance between Mexico City and Buenos Aires and it is quite obvious that Armour may have some misapprehensions with regard to the situation here for there is always the possibility that Ojeda, the Mexican Ambassador in Buenos Aires, may not be clearly representing the position of his government.

First of all, I think I should say that there is very little difference between the attitude of Armour as expressed in his telegram No. 1437, of June 6, 6 p.m., and that of Padilla. Armour makes it very clear in his telegram that he is of the opinion that the present status quo cannot continue indefinitely and he seriously recommends to the Department in this telegram that unless certain things can be accomplished — that is if the present Argentine government refuses to act favorably, then there is no other course open but to order him home for consultation or to announce that he is returning on a leave of absence, and it is interesting to note that Kelly, the British Ambassador, feels the same way. Padilla, I think, would not feel that it would be desirable to remove diplomatic representatives from Argentina in this way for the present until a very definite step had been taken by the American republics in common, in order

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.
order to see if Argentina will not act. In all his conversations with me, he has made it clear that he feels that the present status quo is undesirable and that the longer it continues the more undesirable it will be. In this apparently his attitude does not differ from that of Armour or the Department. I think we all feel that way about it - that is that the present status quo is undesirable and that the longer it lasts the unhappier it is and the more difficulties it can give rise to, not only with respect to the Argentine but in the other Americas.

In my conversations with Padilla, as I have made it clear in my letters, Padilla does not believe that we can recognize the Argentine regime until it has performed specific acts which show real performance and real collaboration and which place Argentina squarely on the side of the United Nations. He feels that any recognition based on promises would be humiliating to all of the other American states and would be just about as bad a precedent in inter-American action as could be set.

When Padilla said to Mexico's Ambassador in Buenos Aires that he should say to the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Argentine that Mexico felt that the performance by the Argentine of her obligations under the Rio Resolutions was considered by Mexico as indispensable to recognition and implied definitely that such action would have to be taken before recognition, I think Padilla had in mind exactly what you had in mind in your telegram No. 968, of May 17, 8 p.m. to this Embassy, which I assume was a circular telegram to the other American republics and which I think is the same telegram that Armour refers to in his telegram No. 1437, of June 6, 6 p.m. to the Department, as the Department's telegram No. 304, of May 17, 9 p.m., to the Embassy in Buenos Aires.

According to Armour's telegram No. 1437, he seems to think that the American nations should bring uniform pressure on the Argentine regime based on implementation of the considerations set forth in your telegram to this Embassy No. 968 of May 17, 8 p.m.

In this telegram you stated that specifically, the Farrell regime has taken no effective action to date and appears to be farther away than ever from taking such action on basic measures such as the following: Intervention and control of the principal Nazi business firms in the Argentine; Cessation of governmental dealings with firms on the proclaimed and statutory lists; Internment of axis diplomats pending exchange and detention of axis nationals; Liquidation of axis propaganda media; Liquidation of axis, and control of pro-axis organizations; Restriction and control of travel and frontier crossings by persons suspected of pro-axis activities endangering hemispheric security; Adequate control over the transmission of communications and messages abroad endangering the security of the continent and the United Nations' war effort.
I gather that Armour appears to believe that these are indispensable acts which the Farrell regime will have to carry through before recognition can be considered by us or by the other American republics. At the same time, in his telegram No. 1437, of June 6, 6 p.m., he takes exception to Padilla's suggestion to the Mexican Ambassador in Buenos Aires which was conveyed to the Under Secretary of Foreign Relations of the Argentine, to the effect that a prerequisite to recognition was the carrying through by the Argentine regime of the obligations of the Argentine under the Rio Conference.

I have examined carefully the Resolutions of the Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics at Rio held from January 15 to January 28, 1942, and, without going into a detailed analysis of the Resolutions, it would seem to me that the Resolutions cover little more than the points set forth in your telegram above referred to and from which I have quoted. It seems to me that there is therefore very little difference between Padilla's suggestion that the Argentine regime carry through its obligations under the Rio Resolutions and the points mentioned in your telegram above quoted, and Armour's own views as to the prerequisites. If it seems in Armour's opinion that it would be an obstacle for the present Argentine regime to take these acts on the basis of carrying through the Rio Resolutions agreed to by the Castillo regime, which the present regime so definitely repudiates, then it would seem to me there should be no fundamental difficulty in presenting these prerequisites to the Argentine regime in another form. I do not think that it would be indispensable to say that the Argentine regime has to carry through the obligations of the Argentine under the Rio Resolutions. The essential thing is that the appropriate acts should be taken. I think when Padilla mentioned the Rio Resolutions and the obligations of the Argentine thereunder to the Mexican Ambassador in Buenos Aires, he had in mind only a very definite way and a rather all-inclusive way of putting the matter up to the Argentine regime.

I have not discussed this matter recently with Padilla because I felt I had no authority to do so, but I feel sure that Padilla and the Mexican Government would not insist on putting it up to the Argentine regime in the form of carrying through the resolutions of the Rio Conference. Padilla is a realist and an understanding man, and what he is interested in is acts, not words, and that is what we are interested in.

Padilla has consistently had in mind, as I have indicated in my letters, that there should be either a meeting of the American states which have actually broken with the Axis and implemented their breach - and he has hoped that Bolivia might be brought into the picture before such a meeting - or a consultation between the American states through the channels now available in order to work out a uniform attitude and so
that the Argentine regime could be told definitely what acts must be performed before recognition can be considered.

If there is one man in the other Americas who believes firmly in common action and who has stuck to it, it is Padilla, and his one thought is that, either through a meeting or a consultation, we should arrive at something we can say together and by common agreement to the Argentine regime. He feels that if we all agree on what to say and say it, and the Argentine does not then follow through, we have done at least what prudence requires; and even if the Argentine does not act under this approach, it will have the effect of solidifying the attitudes of all the other American states, some of which are always quivering and tottering in this respect, as you know better than I.

In other words, I can find no fundamental difference between the attitude of ourselves, of Armour, and of the Mexicans.

It is only a question of consultation, either through a meeting or through diplomatic approaches. Padilla has always expressed the willingness to take the initiative in approaches if we think this desirable but I think he is quite willing to have us take the initiative. I believe he thinks it would be helpful in getting the response if Mexico took the initiative rather than we, but he is willing to conform, I believe, to any procedure. What he is interested in is that something should be done, and it is apparent that Armour also thinks this.

Again I should like to say that I have not discussed this particular phase I am now going to mention, with Padilla, but I am sure that he is of the opinion that we should make such a common approach to the Argentine before we remove our Chiefs of Mission. On this point, while I have not discussed it with him, I feel that he would be rather definite. I feel that this would be his attitude without discussing it with him, as I know him so well. I think he feels that to order our Chiefs of Mission away now without making this last common attempt to get action on a definite basis put frankly and directly before the Argentine regime would be to burn all of our bridges with the Argentine and would only accentuate the situation. In other words, I do not believe that the Mexicans would be prepared to remove their Ambassador from the Argentine entirely until such a common approach had been made by all of us to the Argentine on a specific basis agreed upon and proved unsuccessful. If such an agreed-upon approach is made and the Argentine regime fails to act, then I think the Mexican Government would be willing to consider the removal of their Chief of Mission. I wish to emphasize that this is only my considered opinion of what the Mexican attitude would be in this respect, without having discussed it specifically with Padilla. I am inclined to think it would be the attitude of some of the other
other American countries as well. For that reason I think we should go slowly about ordering our Ambassador away from there, either on leave or for consultation, until this effort has been made, for it might leave us in an isolated position.

As I have indicated in this letter, it seems to me that the conditions which you have set forth in the telegram to this Embassy No. 968 of May 17, 8 p.m., and recited in a paragraph of this letter and to which Armour obviously refers in his telegram No. 1437, 6 p.m. to the Department as having been contained in the Department's telegram No. 804, of May 17, 9 p.m. to our Embassy in Buenos Aires, are practically identical with the obligations which the American states assumed under the Resolutions of the Rio Conference. I would be very happy if you could have someone in the Department give me a statement of the additional obligations contained in the Rio Resolutions which are not covered by the conditions which you laid down in your telegram under reference in this paragraph. It would be helpful to me for guidance in any conversations which I may have informally with Padilla on this matter.

I am quite in agreement with Armour that it would be desirable for us to try to get together to determine what the American nations shall say to the Argentine are the prerequisites to recognition. I do feel that in doing so, if we do it through diplomatic channels and we take the initiative, we should approach Padilla and Araujo first. I think it is a consideration which we owe them, but I think that we cannot deal through Araujo on a matter of this kind more closely than we do with Padilla. As I have said in a previous letter, they are the two strongest of the Foreign Ministers of the other American republics and enjoy the greatest prestige, but in many ways Padilla is more stable and more consistent than Araujo and there are personal, as well as national considerations which we must take into account. In my own opinion, Padilla can be as helpful in this matter as anyone and I think we would be making a grave error if we did not keep in touch with him on this matter.

My own feeling is, therefore, that we should get together either through a meeting or through diplomatic approaches to get a common attitude on what we shall say to the Argentine are the prerequisites for recognition, and that we should make this common front for presentation to the Argentine regime before we take any action with respect to removing our Chief of Mission, whether it be on leave or for consultation. I am sure that Padilla will be glad to cooperate in any form, but I shall discuss the matter specifically with him only after I have some expression of your desires on this matter.

I think there is one thing that we must keep in mind so far as Mexico is concerned, and that is that in the inter-American picture and in the world picture, her attitude has been in a straight line and without any deviation during the last years.
She has collaborated as fully and as undeviatingly in the political inter-American and world picture as any one of the American republics and in this connection, I only mention that she never recognized the situation in Abyssinia; she has not had any relationships with the Franco Government; and when she declared war, she went the whole way and declared war on Japan, Germany, and Italy, while some of the others, including our best friends, did not declare war on Japan. I think we cannot ignore the fact that Mexico’s policy has consistently followed a straight line when others have from time to time wavered.

I am sending you some extra copies of this letter with the thought that you may wish to send a copy to Armour by air mail in Buenos Aires.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

G.S. MESSERSMITH
After reading this letter before signing, I find that there is one point which I have not brought out. In view of the fact that I think everyone is agreed that it is essential to bring the prerequisites for recognition to the attention of the Argentine regime as a last effort before we take some drastic action such as bringing our Ambassador home on leave for consultation, I think agreement will have to be reached between ourselves and at least a few of the larger countries such as Brazil and Mexico as to whether our common approach to the Argentine regime and what is shall be, will have to be determined, that is, whether it will be by a meeting of Foreign Ministers or by reaching an agreement through diplomatic channels. I am inclined to think that a meeting of Foreign Ministers will be a little bit difficult as Bolivia is still out of the picture. The best form may be found to be to use diplomatic channels.

In that case, I venture the suggestion for consideration that it should be Mexico through Padilla that should make the consultations. What we are after is to get some concrete and positive results. That is the principal thing. The present temper of the Argentine is such, and will be, that any lead we take is resented, for, of course without reason, they are placing the responsibility for the attitude of the other American nations on us. I think therefore that consultation on what we shall say to the Argentine as a prerequisite for recognition, if it is headed up by us, will immediately prejudice beforehand the attitude of the Argentine regime on performance. I think in almost the same degree, the same is true of Brazil. The traditional feeling between Brazil and the Argentine has been accentuated by developments during the last few years, and I think the Argentine position is such that Brazil is in almost as poor a position to take the lead in consultation as we are. On the other hand, Mexico enjoys more prestige among the other republics than she has in the past, and for some reason or other the Argentine looks upon Mexico with less suspicion than they do some of the others. In view of the fact that Padilla is so firm in his ideas as to the necessity for such definite, concrete acts before recognition can be considered, and in view of the fact that his personal prestige is so great, and that the position of Mexico itself in a matter of this kind is relatively favorable, I think we should consider having Padilla take the lead in such consultations. I think it would have much more chance of success and get to the Argentines in a better way than if either we or the Brazilians take the lead. I am suggesting this merely from the point of view of practicability and feasibility and I have thought a great deal of it recently. I believe that it would be the best approach. Padilla in a matter of this kind would be completely dependable for I know what his views are, and

fundamentally
fundamentally they are much stronger than the expressed views of some in these other American republics who express doubt with respect to Mexico's attitude. It may be that some of Mexico's diplomats abroad have not correctly expressed the attitude of the Mexican Government, but that is something that Padilla can take care of. Padilla himself we can absolutely trust.

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G. S. M.