SECRET AND
CONFIDENTIAL
FIRST PRIORITY POUCH

México, D.F.,
November 9, 1944.

No. 21,309

SUBJECT: Transmitting Text of Memorandum Handed Me by
the Minister of Foreign Relations, Dr. Padilla,
at 7 p.m. November 8, on the Argentine Situation,
Which Memorandum He Is Delivering to the Chiefs
of Mission of the American Republics in Mexico
City, With the Exception of the Argentine.

The Honorable
Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to the Department's secret
telegram No. 1956 of November 2, 4 p.m. with respect to
the Argentine and to my despatch No. 21,242 of November 7,
with which I transmitted the Spanish text of a memorandum
in reply from the Minister of Foreign Relations, Dr. Padilla,
and in which despatch I made appropriate comment. I also
have to refer to my despatch No. 21,273 of November 8,
with which I transmitted a translation of the memorandum
of Dr. Padilla. I also have to refer to my informal con­
fidential letters of November 6, 7 and 8 to Mr. Norman
Armour, and to my secret telegram No. 1399 of November 7,
3 p.m., in which I summarized the conclusions of Dr. Padilla's
memorandum.

I had not seen Dr. Padilla during the course of the day
of November 8, as I was awaiting some reaction from the
Department to the above-mentioned communications. Shortly
after 6 p.m. I called the Minister to arrange for an oppor­
tunity to see the Minister and in reply was informed before
I could request an interview that the Minister had asked that
I be informed that he would be glad to see me at once.

I proceeded to the Foreign Ministry and after a few
words of warm congratulation on the re-election of President
Roosevelt, the Minister immediately stated that he had dur­
ing the course of the day seen the Brazilian, Uruguayan and
Cuban Ambassadors and had delivered to them a memorandum,
which he was about to read to me. He then went on to read
a memorandum, the substance of which I telegraphed to the
Department immediately after the conversation in my secret
telegram No. 1404 of November 8, 8 p.m. The Minister read
the memorandum, the text of which the Department has in
translation through the last mentioned telegram.

The Minister then went on to say that it was his in­
tention to call in the Chiefs of Mission of the other
American
American Republics with the exception of the Argentine during the course of November 9 and hand them the same memorandum. He said that as I had noted the memorandum which he had just read me and was now handing me, and which he had already delivered during the day to the Brazilian, Uruguayan and Cuban Ambassadors was in substance the same as the memorandum which he had delivered to me on Monday evening, November 6.

I need not say that this development considerably surprised me and came somewhat as a shock in view of the fact that it had been my understanding from my conversations with the Minister that he would await action until I got some reaction from the Department which I could convey to him concerning the memorandum which he had given me on the evening of November 6. In all correctness I should state that there was no specific understanding between the Minister and myself as the result of the conversations which have taken place since my arrival in Mexico City on the afternoon of November 5 to the effect that he would await action until he heard from us. I felt, however, that this was definitely implied in the character of our conversations. In view, however, of the fact that the Minister is free to act for his Government just as we are and to take any initiative he may see fit, I confined myself to merely expressing surprise that he had taken this initiative in handing the memorandum to the Ambassadors of Brazil, Uruguay and Cuba as I knew his memorandum intended for us was still under consideration in the Department in Washington and the full text thereof had undoubtedly arrived there only that afternoon. The Minister made no response to this except to say that the matter had a certain urgency and he felt it desirable not to delay discussing this matter with the Chiefs of Mission in Mexico City.

The Minister went on to say that the Ambassadors of Brazil, Uruguay and Cuba, to whom he had handed this memorandum hereto attached, had expressed themselves as deeply gratified with the initiative which he was taking as they were convinced that it was a constructive approach and one which offered very real probabilities of success. The Minister said that the above-mentioned Ambassadors had stated, without any request on his part, that they would strongly support the initiative before their respective Governments. The Minister said that the Uruguayan Ambassador in particular was interested and "enthusiastic." The Uruguayan Ambassador had referred to the consultations which his Government had been making recently on the Argentinian situation and particularly towards the end that a meeting be held to discuss the Argentine case. The Minister said that the Uruguayan Ambassador said that he was sure in view of the Minister's initiative his Government would abandon the attitude it had been taking and would approve the Minister's initiative. It may be noted in this connection that, of course, the Uruguayan Ambassador was expressing his own view only but it may be noted that he is one of the most respected of Uruguay's diplomats and is close to his own Government.
The Minister went on to say that he had on November 6 and 7, had conversations with the Brazilian, Colombian and Ecuadoran Ambassadors about the situation in general but without any reference to this memorandum. He said that he had spoken strongly to the Ambassador of Colombia and of Ecuador with regard to the action of their Governments in indicating their willingness to enter into a meeting of Foreign Ministers to discuss the Argentine case and doing so without consultation with the other American Republics. The Minister said that he had pointed out to the Colombian and Ecuadoran Ambassadors the importance of keeping action of the American states on a common basis and not on a regional basis. He said to them that if Colombia and Ecuador and Venezuela took action of this kind on so important a matter affecting all of the Americas without adequate consultation with the others, it would inevitably lead to the Caribbean states consulting with each other and other areas in the Americas doing the same. This sort of procedure, he said, would completely disrupt the inter-American unity which all of us were striving for and realized the necessity of. The Minister said that he had spoken with the Brazilian Ambassador either on November 6 or 7, in the same sense. He found him in complete accord with this point of view.

My first reaction to the conversation with the Minister last evening was one of surprise that he should have gone ahead with this initiative which he is taking without awaiting word from us. Nevertheless in my secret telegram No. 1404 of November 8, 8 p.m., in which I transmitted the translation of the text of the memorandum, I stated that it is my opinion that in view of the fact that Dr. Padilla has taken this action, which is so likely to be acceptable to most of the other Republics, if not all, and which action gives such strong promise of providing a satisfactory solution, we should promptly inform him of our support of his initiative.

As I have frequently stated to the Department, Dr. Padilla is a Latin who knows the Latin mind and he is in very close contact with the Latin Republics. The diplomatic representation of the Latin American Republics in Mexico City is on a little higher level than it probably is in most capitals. Through them and through many sources of information which he has on account of his personal prestige, he is very fully informed concerning developments in the other American Republics. He is, therefore, deeply conscious of what he believes to be a fact, and which, I believe, is a fact, that there is a strong feeling in the other American Republics that a meeting of Foreign Ministers should have been held long since and that there is a good deal of feeling that it has not been held. He is also conscious of the fact that in most of these Republics there is a strong feeling that it has not been held because our Government has not shown any interest in a meeting being held. He is also conscious of the fact that in the other American Republics there is a deep awareness of the failure of the Argentine to collaborate in the inter-American picture but at the same time a deep realization of the necessity for endeavoring to bring about those changes in the Argentine which will make possible the reincorporation of the Argentine in the inter-American picture and collaboration.
I have given a great deal of thought during the course of the night to the Minister's initiative and to what impelled him to proceed without awaiting any further word from us and I have come to the conclusion that he took this initiative out of a real desire to be helpful and because he believes that it is necessary for some country other than ourselves to take the initiative in this matter. There is no doubt that in all of the Latin American countries, including the Argentine, there is this feeling that we have been taking too strongly the initiative and that as a result it has been possible for certain groups in many of the American Republics to become sympathetic to the ideas so strongly pushed forward by the Argentine that this whole question is one between the Argentine and ourselves and not an American question. While these Governments realize that we have been meticulous in the matter of consultation and have leaned over backwards in consulting with them before taking important steps, at the same time there is no gainsaying that it is we who have always taken the initiative. The fact that it has been necessary for us to do so for so many obvious reasons does not change the fundamental situation so far as its psychological aspects are concerned which can have very real results in realistic situations.

I am, therefore, of the opinion that the Minister has acted as he has in the conviction that another country than we may, must usefully undertake the initiative and have more probable chance of getting complete success in bringing about a constructive and satisfactory solution. There is no doubt that the Minister and Mexico are as much interested in the maintenance of complete American unity as ourselves or any country of the Americas. I think we must, therefore, accept this as the primary motive of his action.

I regret that the circumstances were such last evening when the Minister handed me the appended memorandum that we could not enter into a complete discussion thereof. He had appointments which he had to meet and which precluded any discussion last evening. I did, however, say to him that while the memorandum hereto attached appeared to be in substance the same as the one which he had handed me on the evening of November 6, I was particularly interested in the wording of subdivision d in paragraph 6. I was particularly interested in determining whether he had in mind the question of elections in the Argentine and whether he still felt that elections were necessary as an indication of a return to democratic practices and real cooperation in the Argentine.

The Minister said that he was glad that I had raised this point for he was so strongly convinced of the necessity of elections. He said that obviously no one could trust the word of those who were at present in control of the Argentine Government. He said the record was too clear in this respect. In his opinion elections were absolutely essential if a truly cooperative course was to be followed by the Argentine and if the Argentine popular will was to find any expression. He said on the other hand it was difficult to say in a memorandum of this kind that elections would have to be held in so many words because of the situation in some of the other American Republics where democratic practices were not well established, where dictatorships existed but where the Government was fully collaborating in the war effort and in the inter-American picture. He thought, therefore, that the Bolivian procedure, which he had referred to in the memorandum
memorandum handed to us on November 6, could serve as a precedent and that it was not absolutely essential that the elections should be held before the Argentine be permitted to participate in a meeting but that all the necessary steps towards the providing for the election had been taken. He said that this procedure, he believed, would be adequate and that it was one which would seem reasonable and satisfactory to all of the other Latin American Republics.

I considered in my conversation with the Minister last evening expressing the hope that he would not deliver this memorandum to the other Chiefs of Mission today until I had been able to consult the Department. Under the circumstances, however, I deemed that this was not a proper thing for me to do. He had already delivered it to the Ambassadors of Brazil, Uruguay, and Cuba. They would undoubtedly bring the matter to the attention of their colleagues in any event. Further, it did not seem proper for me to make such a suggestion to the Minister in view of the fact that Mexico is exercising a proper sovereign function in taking such an initiative. I further have the conviction that surprising as this move of the Minister is in some respects, it is taken in good faith and with a desire to be helpful.

It is my considered opinion that this memorandum of the Minister, hereto attached, will receive a satisfactory response from practically all, if not all, of the Latin American Republics. I believe that it is probable that in a very short time he will receive a satisfactory response from all of the Latin American Republics. It is the sort of move which the Latin American Republics have been waiting for. The Minister has formulated his memorandum in such a way that it meets the situation with which we are all confronted and at the same time is likely to be found acceptable to all of the Latin American countries.

There is only one reason why the memorandum may not be in my mind satisfactory to us and that is that we would like to have a meeting earlier. I believe that in this respect the Minister is correct in fixing a date such as February 1, 1945, as he believes the consultations which will take place in the meantime on the Argentine situation and the repercussions of the initiative with respect to a meeting on that date will bring about the necessary changes within the Argentine. The Minister is quite prepared to advance the date if this seems feasible. He has fixed the date of February 1 as he believes this gives ample time for consultation on the question of the Argentine and the presentation of common points of view to the Argentine regime and therefore to give ample time for certain changes to be effected within the Argentine which will make it possible for the other American states to have her participate in the meeting.

While he has mentioned February 1 as the date when some definitive resolutions may be taken with regard to the projects approved at Dumbarton Oaks, he has had really in
mind not so much the question of the definitive approval of these projects by that time as the fact that that date will give ample time for appropriate consultations on the Argentine and for certain changes to be effected of an adequate character in the Argentine.

My considered opinion is that we should welcome this initiative of the Minister. He has taken it on his own initiative and without any impulse from our government. It will be recognized as an initiative of Mexico. It is, I believe, in view of the circumstances desirable, if we are to reach a constructive solution of this matter, that some other American state than ourselves now take the initiative. I do not know of any state better situated, from every point of view among the Latin American states, to do this than Mexico. It is for this reason that I have recommended in my telegram No. 1404 of November 8, 8 p.m., which recommendation I repeat after a night's reflection, that we should inform the Foreign Minister of Mexico promptly that we are in accord with his initiative and will give it our support. I believe that we should do this promptly but that we should leave the initiative entirely in his hands.

I realize that it is not possible for us at this time to determine what United Nations meetings may be in progress in the next months but I do not believe that holding of any United Nations meetings would interfere with the holding of a meeting of Foreign Ministers. It may be that if a United Nations meeting would coincide more or less with a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the American Republics that certain of our high officials who should otherwise be at such meeting would not be present but in that case that situation would be thoroughly understood by the other American Republics for to them the matter of most importance is that a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the American Republics should be held. In any event, we have an adequate number of highly placed officials of the Department who are in a position to represent us at such a meeting of Foreign Ministers.

From the purely realistic point of view I do not believe that we have any alternative except to give the initiative of the Mexican Foreign Minister our approval. It is more than probable that it will have the approval and in most cases the enthusiastic approval of all the Latin American Republics except the Argentine. In that case we would be standing alone and for that reason I believe, without delay, indicate to the Mexican Foreign Minister that we are in agreement with his initiative and will give it our support.

I have, of course, up to this time not given any indication to the Minister of the attitude of our Government beyond
beyond that expressed in the Department's secret telegram No. 1958 of November 2, 4 p.m.

Respectfully yours,

G. S. MESSERSMITH

To Department in quintuplicate
GSM:NA
File No. 800 Argentina
Enclosure:
Copy of Memorandum in Spanish.