Buenos Aires, April 11, 1947

Dear Dean:

With reference to my secret letter of April 3 in which I acknowledged the Department’s secret telegram no. 252 of April 2, 6 p.m., 1947, informing me of the President’s invitation to Ambassador Ivanissevich to call at the White House on March 31 and at which time he gave him a message for President Perón, I have to give you the following information.

Ivanissevich arrived in Buenos Aires on Thursday evening, April 3, and O’Donoghue and I went to the airport as a matter of courtesy. I had no conversation with him there except a word of greeting.

On Tuesday, April 8, the Foreign Minister, Dr. Bramuglia, lunched at the house as I had some distinguished American guests from home; and after lunch the Minister indicated that he would like to remain to discuss some matters. We had not seen each other for a week, he having availed himself of the Easter holidays to get a very much needed rest.

After discussing a number of matters, the Minister referred to the return of Ivanissevich and said that he had seen him for the first time since his return the night before. The Minister himself had been out of the city on this brief holiday until the morning of that day.

The Minister then said that Ivanissevich had seen the President on Sunday, April 6, before the President’s departure for his visit to Mendoza where he presently is.

He said:

The Honorable
Dean Acheson,
Acting Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

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He said that Ivanissevich had communicated to President Perón a message from President Truman and then went on to give me the substance of the message. The Minister said that under instructions of the President, Ivanissevich had conveyed the substance of the message to him the night before.

Last night Ivanissevich came in to see me at the Embassy and told me about the conversation with President Truman and you all at the White House and of his conversation with the President here when he communicated the message of President Truman and also with the Foreign Minister.

I have not seen President Perón since he received this message through Ivanissevich from President Truman as the President has been at Mendoza for almost a week and will not return until tomorrow. I do not, therefore, have his direct personal reactions or observations, but he will undoubtedly ask me to come to see him early next week.

The Foreign Minister informs me that the President is very much pleased with this initiative on the part of our Government and with the message conveyed by Ivanissevich from President Truman. He is particularly appreciative of the interest shown by the President and you all and of the fact that the President in his conversation with Ivanissevich indicated that for the composition of the situation there remains only this action with regard to enemy aliens. The President is very much gratified that our Government recognizes that in the matter of schools and institutions and property, the Argentine Government has carried through loyally and effectively and so far as enemy aliens are concerned, the Foreign Minister said that the President is quite understanding of what President Truman said concerning these of the list of 52 with respect to which action still has to be taken.

The Foreign Minister said that the President and he were fully understanding as they had always been of our insistence that action be taken with regard to these aliens and that no one was more interested than they were that this adequate action should be taken. He referred

Classification Approved
SECRET April 11, 1947
to what he had already told me and which I have reported again in my despatch no. 2119 of March 31, 1947, on the extraordinary steps taken by the Argentine Government through all the means at its disposal to get the remainder of these people. He said that up to date, 13 of the 52 had been deported to Germany as we knew and that of the remainder nine were now under arrest and awaiting deportation and among these nine were some of the worst elements. He expressed a lot of concern that they were not able with all their efforts up to now to get more of these people. He said it was not due to their not making use of every possible means to find them. He could not say how many of them had got out of the country and there was a possibility that all of them not yet apprehended were still in the Argentine, but that this was doubtful. On the other hand, they could not affirm that any one of them had left the Argentine and made his way to Chile, Paraguay, Brazil, or some other neighboring country. All the Argentine Government knew definitely was that of the 52, they had deported 13, had nine, and were making every effort to get the rest and would continue these efforts.

He said that I would appreciate that no matter what their concern over this matter was and their desire to get these people immediately and no matter how much they appreciated President Truman’s message, he did not see how they could augment their efforts to get these people because they had for some months been doing all they could to get them and that I must know this because I had information from them and undoubtedly through my own sources as to what they were doing. He said he did not know how many they would be able to get, but that one thing our Government could be assured of and that was that no one was more interested in getting every one of these people than they were.

I remarked to the Minister that it was unfortunate that Dr. Ivanissevich had not been better informed concerning this matter of enemy aliens as the statement which he made to President Truman showed that he had not been adequately informed concerning this matter. The Minister said:

Classification Approved
April 11, 1947
Minister said that this was unfortunate but that he had been under the impression that Ivanissevich was being currently informed and that in any event, it was unfortunate that Ivanissevich should have said to President Truman that there were no more of these Nazi agents in the Argentine when the Argentine Government knew that some of them were still here and was making these strenuous efforts to get them. It was unfortunate that Ivanissevich had not been better informed and he could not understand that. He said that Ivanissevich was a very honest and sincere man and so thoroughly interested in the most friendly relations between the two countries that he would not make any mis-statements and that he was, therefore, resting under a misapprehension when he made this observation about there being no Nazis left in the country.

The Minister ended the conversation by saying again how deeply the President and he were appreciative of this message, and he was sure that the President would wish to talk with me about it on his return to Buenos Aires from Mendoza.

Last night when Ivanissevich came to see me, he raised the question of the conversation and he repeated to me what he had been told during the conversation, and it was very definitely in accord with the Department's telegram to me. Ivanissevich then went on to say that he had been completely unaware that all of these Nazi agents had not been deported. He had been of the opinion that they had all been cleared out and that is why he made the statement to President Truman that he did. He said that he was very much embarrassed and chagrined by his lack of knowledge and that he should have been lacking in knowledge that his Government had and on which it was acting. He said that since his return to Buenos Aires, he had learned fully what this situation was, and he made it clear in a nice way that he had not been adequately informed by his Government and, therefore, left in this embarrassing position.

As you know, Ivanissevich is a very intelligent man and he is a great surgeon and a great diagnostician, but he has had no experience in matters of this kind and

unfortunately the

Classification Approved

April 11, 1947
unfortunately the Foreign Office here is understaffed and I think there is no doubt but that he was not adequately informed by the Foreign Office of what was being done in this matter of schools and institutions, property, and aliens. I feel sure that the Minister, Dr. Bramuglia, thought Ivanissevich was being currently informed on so important a matter but it is clear that he was not.

I have wished to get this further background to you, and I will write you further when the President returns from Mendoza and after I have seen him as he is, I am sure, going to call me to talk about this matter. I do not see how the Argentine Government can augment the efforts which they are making to get these people whom they do not yet have. With all the really extraordinary efforts they have been making all over the country with the means at their disposal, they have only been able to get an additional nine during a period of several months after they had the original 13 of the 52. This means that of the 52, 30 still remain unapprehended. I am sure that they will get some of them, but how many of them they can get, I do not know. Our people who have ways of knowing what the Argentine officials are doing all over the country in this matter tell me that there is no doubt that the most extraordinary efforts are being made by every possible agency of the Government to find these people. There was a time when I thought that Velazco, the chief of police in Buenos Aires, might not be doing his best, but I have concrete information as to what he is doing through the extraordinary organization he has at his command, and the Buenos Aires police and auxiliary services are very effective. One thing that I do not know is in what way it is possible to augment the effort to find these people.

As the Foreign Minister has repeatedly said to me and as has the President when I have discussed this matter of these aliens with them, and I need not tell you that I could not have spoken to them in more definite and strong terms during the months that I have been here, their preoccupation is that they just like any other government may not be able to find all of these people. They cannot even determine

Classification Approved

April 11, 1947
even determine whether some of them have left the country because so far as neighboring countries are concerned, they cannot get much help. If any of these people have got to southern Chile or southern Brazil where there are such large German colonies, they are lost; because even if the Brazilian and Chilean Governments make the same effort to find them that the Argentines are making they would experience the same difficulties. Some of these people are more scared of returning to Germany than they are of detention in the Argentine in prison for years, and they will make every effort to conceal their identity. I think if the Department will discuss this matter with a man like Hoover or those familiar with the problems involved in finding people of this kind, the Department will realize that with the very best efforts, it is not possible to find all these people and one has to consider that the difficulties in countries with such large, sparsely populated areas are much greater.

I did not wish to write you so long a letter, but because of the importance of the matter, I thought I should give you this further background, and I shall keep you informed after I have seen the President.

The President, Bramuglia, and Ivanissevich are understanding of the fact that the conversation with President Truman was off the record, and so far there has not been the slightest indication that anyone here in the Government except President Perón, Bramuglia, and Ivanissevich have knowledge thereof.

In view of the President's interest, you may wish to give him the substance of my letter of April 5 and this letter, and when you do so I would appreciate very much your expressing to him my very deep appreciation of his interest and initiative.

Believe me, with all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

Classification Approved

SECRET April 11, 1947