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Subject: "Ratification of the Acts of Chapultepec".

The Foreign Minister on my arrival in the Argentine and during the first days of the Peron government, was Mr. Juan Cooke. During the first conversations that I had with him I had the impression that he would not last very long under the Peron administration. This also seemed to be the impression in Buenos Aires. He was shortly followed by Mr. Attilio Bramuglia. He was an attorney in Buenos Aires who had specialized largely in labor matters and had been working particularly in labor matters connected with the railways. He was considered to be a very good lawyer and a very sound man. He had a very pleasing personality, a very quiet manner, and there is no doubt that he was a man of very deep convictions. He had been a supporter of Peron in the elections. When I made my first visit to him I had a very excellent impression of him and of his capacity, and this impression was only increased as the days went by. He was certainly the most convinced man in the Cabinet appointed by President Peron of the necessity of good relations with the United States. I never at any time detected anything unfriendly in his attitude towards the United States or any of the many prejudices which characterized so many of my best friends in the Argentine who claimed to be good friends of our country but who, in so many respects, were completely lacking in understanding of it as they were of other countries. It was very shortly after the inauguration of President Peron that he said that he was going ahead with the ratification of the Acts of Chapultepec by the Congress. He spoke of it as being rather a difficult matter. He said that it would be done but that it would require a good deal of maneuvering. I told him that I could not understand why it should be so difficult or require much political maneuvering as after all he had such an overwhelming <sup>majority</sup> ~~authority~~ in both the Senate and in the Chamber of Deputies. The President said that some of

his people were very much against the ratification of the Acts of Chapultepec. The principle difficulty lay in the attitude of Senator Molinari who was the head of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and who was in many ways the most influential member of the Senate. The President went on to say that Senator Molinari had always professed very friendly sentiments for the United States, but that he would be exceedingly difficult on this matter of the ratification. He would to all intents and purposes render lip service but he would endeavor to place under cover all sorts of obstacles to ratification and delay it as long as he could. He had already talked with Senator Molinari who had promised his full support towards quick ratification, but he knew how to take this. The President spoke of the opposition to the ratification by some of the students in the University and also by the small but very vociferous nationalistic group. He said to me that I must not be upset by some of the things which would be said by ~~the~~ members of his party in the Senate in particular, because in time they would come around, but he wanted the action to be taken as quickly as possible. He said that he would like me to begin talking also with the Minister of Foreign Relations and Dr. Bramuglia about the matter as he would be a great deal of help among some of the deputies and senators who were opposed to the ratification.

I, therefore, mentioned this matter of the Acts of Chapultepec to Dr. Bramuglia as one of the things which were so important towards putting things into better shape. Dr. Bramuglia said that he knew that I knew from the President what the attitude of the President <sup>of</sup> and/his administration was on this matter and that, of course, he was a hundred percent for ratification as quickly as possible. ~~XX~~ I could be sure that he would do everything that he could but the matter lay really very largely

in the hands of the President. Dr. Bramuglia also spoke very freely to me about the difficulties which would be placed in the way of ratification by Senator Molinari.

The appropriate bill for the ratification of the Acts of Chapultepec was introduced into the Congress and it was referred to a Committee, it was of course to Senator Molinari's committee that it was referred. Immediately there began to be difficulties. Students began to riot in the streets. These disturbances were caused by very few students, several hundred at the most. They created disturbances all over the city. General Velasco was at that time Police President of Buenos Aires. He was known to be an extreme nationalist. It cannot be said that he was unfriendly towards the United States but he was not particularly friendly at the best. He was an extreme nationalist. He was one of those Argentines who looked upon all the other Latin countries of America with a certain amount of disdain. His attitude was that through the ratification of the Acts of Chapultepec, the Argentine government would be placing itself into too close collaboration with others of the American states. Whether he was against military collaboration with the United States I was never able to determine.

In any event, this negative attitude of General Velasco as Police President of Buenos Aires made itself obvious. The police must have had orders not to interfere too seriously with these rioting students. The tolerance which the police showed encouraged the students and they began to explode bombs in various parts of the city. They were bombs which made more noise than they did damage, as ~~they~~ a matter of fact no damage really of any serious character was done by these explosions. They were, however, disturbing to public opinion and they caused considerable comment outside of the country. They were given much more



importance outside of the Argentine than they were in the Argentine itself, where it was realized that all this trouble was being made by several hundred young men. The effect, however, of these acts and demonstrations by the students was to fortify the position of some of those members of the Peronista party who were opposed to the ratification and they gave aid and comfort to Senator Molinari. Nothing happened with regard to action on the bill. As the President and I saw each other several times a week at least, I kept mentioning the delays in the Senate on the ratification. He said that he had spoken to General Velasco and told him that unless these riots and demonstrations were stopped he would relieve him of his post as Police President and send him outside of the city. He was sure that that was going to be sufficient to stop this. So far as Senator Molinari was concerned, the President said that there was no doubt in his mind that Molinari was deliberately delaying action; he would have to take definite steps about it. I told the President that I had known Senator Molinari very well during my first stay in the Argentine as Consul General years before. I said that I found that during the years that I had been away Senator Molinari had not changed one particle. He had always been unfriendly towards the United States. He had always been against anything which involved collaboration with the United States. He had spent a good deal of time in the United States during his youth and had received, as he knew, a part of his education in our country. Why he had these feelings I did not know, but that he had them we all knew and it could not be disregarded. I said that there were a good many other things that he knew and that I knew concerning Senator Molinari; he would say one thing publicly and promise one thing formally and then do the other. He would make florid and flamboyant statements about certain attitudes which he had and among others friendly attitudes towards the United States, when

as a matter of fact he acted completely differently. In my opinion, one could not expect anything from Senator Molinari except just the position which he was taking, one of delay and obstruction. The only way in which to get Molinari to act was to make him understand that he had to act or he would lose his position in the Senate and in the party. The President said that he wished to avoid taking any drastic action. On the other hand, this attitude of Molinari was delaying a thing which was of primary importance, and it was better to get this ratification of the Acts of Chapultepec through the Congress before other things were done which he wished to do. He would have another talk with Molinari.

I had a talk with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Bramuglia, and told him about this last conversation with President Peron. He said that he was glad that the President was reaching the point of taking definite action with regard to Senator Molinari. The student riots had died down as the result of the action of the President in talking with General Velasco. The attitude of the radical party members of both Houses of Congress ~~w~~ could not be expected to change; they were going to take a position of opposition and violent and vituperative opposition to anything which the administration proposed. The opposition, however, would be futile as they had so small a number of members of the Congress. The whole thing was to get it to a vote and that depended on Senator Molinari. I said to the Foreign Minister that he must understand that in this matter I must stand aside as the question of whether Argentina ratified or did not ratify the Acts of Chapultepec was a matter within her own decision, and that the fact that I was having these conversations with the President and with him on this matter must not be misunderstood as being any pressure on the part of my government. We were interested that the Acts should be ratified in order that the way would be open to the other things which we wished to do. Dr. Bramuglia said that he

thoroughly understood and that these conversations were most useful, and that my interest was most helpful.

It was perhaps a week later that in a conversation with the President he said to me that he had had a talk with Senator Molinari who had promised him that action would be taken during the course of the week on this matter. Nothing had happened. He had come to the conclusion that nothing would happen unless he took certain drastic steps which he wished to avoid. He might have to take them later but he did not wish to take them with reference to the ratification of the Acts of Chapultepec. The overwhelming majority of the Congress was prepared to vote for the ratification. He did not wish anything to mar it. I told the President that the long delays in ratification, in view of the majority of the party in both Houses of the Congress and the known attitude of the government which he had so publicly expressed in favor of ratification, was creating a certain amount of misunderstanding abroad. There was being question of his good faith in a part of the press in my own country and in others of the Latin American countries. I knew that there was not this lack of good faith on his part and on the part of his administration, but one could understand in view of the background of the past, why this interpretation was being placed on the delay. The President said that he understood this and it had been giving him concern; that was why action had to be taken. He was going to ask me to help him. He asked me to invite Senator Molinari to lunch alone at the Embassy residence and to talk with him about this matter and make it clear to him how much it was in the interest of the Argentine and of all of the Americas that this ratification should not be delayed any longer. I was not particularly pleased to do this, ~~but~~ and I felt that it would not lead to anything, but I saw no reason why I should not and I invited Senator Molinari for lunch immediately and

he came the following day. It is not necessary to go into any details with regard to the conversation. He was the most friendly and amiable and responsive man one could imagine. He was his usual insincere self. One might have thought there was no better friend that the United States had in the world and that there was no one who was more interested in the quick passage of ratification. I told him that there were those who were beginning to doubt his position on this matter and that it was giving a good deal of basis for misunderstandings, not only with regard to the position of the Argentine government and of the President, but also of himself; the sooner these were cleared up perhaps the better it would be for everyone concerned. I did not care to go any further. Molinari assured me that within a week the appropriate action would be taken, and nothing happened. I told the President, of course, immediately after the luncheon of the conversation I'd had with Molinari and said that I expected nothing from it. When nothing happened in another week, the President said to me that he wished me to invite himself and Dr. Bramuglia, the Foreign Minister, and Senator Molinari to dinner at the residence; no one else had best be there. The President said that he would open the question of the ratification; he would speak very frankly about it. He wanted me then to take up the lead and put Molinari on the spot and to put him on the spot very strongly. The President said that he knew that I would know how to handle this matter. He was sure that this would settle it. Such a conversation would bring Molinari into the open. The dinner took place in the Embassy residence shortly thereafter. After a pleasant dinner we went into the library. The President almost immediately, after expressing his desire that certain things be done to improve relations between our two countries, spoke of the ratification of the Acts and the delays which were taking place. He said that he was greatly concerned as to the effect on public



opinion, not only in the Argentine but abroad, of these delays. It was causing misunderstandings. He turned to Senator Molinari and said to him, "Senator, you have been telling me that this thing will be taken care of and it is in your hands and nothing has happened for weeks".

I do not know whether the President had said anything to Dr. Bramuglia but in any event I directed my conversation to Dr. Bramuglia. I went into a fairly long picture of the whole situation and expressed my disappointment that there had been no action. I said I was speaking entirely personally. I said that my general instructions, of course, were that it was the hope of my government that the Argentine government ratify the Acts of Chapultepec so that with this action and other things the way would be open to putting our relationships on the basis that I thought we all wanted them. It would certainly be in the interest, not only of the Argentine and of ourselves, but of all of the Americas that this action should be taken. Somebody would have to bear the responsibility for this delay. I turned to Senator Molinari and said that I was confident that the delay was not due to the President nor to Dr. Bramuglia. I said that I frankly thought that he was prejudicing his own position in the Senate by not taking action on this matter when it was known to other senators and deputies that the President was so much interested in ratification. I said to ~~XXX~~ Senator Molinari, "It looks to me as if though you are bearing the whole responsibility for this and I wonder whether you wish to do it before the President and the Congress and the Argentine people".

Senator Molinari was not in many ways too intelligent a man. On the other hand he was not a stupid man. He was sly and malicious. I feel pretty certain that he knew that this dinner had not taken place by accident. He knew that it was most unusual for the President to visit other Embassies for any occasion and especially for a dinner such



as this. I feel very certain that he saw through the whole performance and that he realized that unless he moved, his position in the Senate and in the Peronista party was in danger. He knew that this would mean that in spite of his clever maneuvering during all these many years in which he had been in the Senate, that his position was prejudiced. He knew that he had tried the President's patience sufficiently and that he would have to act. As he always acted on the basis of self-interest, he knew when that point had been reached.

The rest of the evening passed pleasantly in ordinary conversation and when the President left he expressed his appreciation to me for the way I'd handled the matter and said, "You will find that the thing will be done very quickly now".

As a matter of fact, within a relatively few days the appropriate action was taken by the Congress and the adherence of Argentina to the Acts of Chapultepec became a fact. The way was now open to begin to discuss with the President and the Foreign Minister the questions of enemy aliens and enemy property. I think there was a feeling of relief in the country when the Congress took this action on the Acts of Chapultepec. People understood definitely through this major act that the Argentine government was on a new path. It was a complete reversal of a good period of the past. It was in many ways the most significant act which the Argentine government had taken for many years in a matter of collaboration with the other American states and with us.