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MEMORANDUM

CONFIDENTIAL

Buenos Aires
December 6, 1946

To: The Ambassador

From: Howard H. Tewksbury

The goal to be sought in the relations between the United States and any foreign government, it seems to me, should be to have these on a completely cordial and cooperative basis. With respect to Latin America, this would, of course, imply complete collaboration by all of the American republics in Pan American problems, including the proposed Pan American defense pact.

Unfortunately our relations with Argentina today fall short of this and have for many years past. There have been errors and bad judgment on both sides and neither can alone be blamed for the failure to achieve and maintain the desired relations. There are many factors which, even under most favorable conditions, make it difficult to attain a truly cordial and cooperative relationship, but an objective consideration of some of the factors governing our policy, particularly those of the past two or three years, may help in providing some betterment in our relations with Argentina and prevent further deterioration of them.

It seems to me that one of the principal weaknesses of our policy has been the failure to look at the problem on a long-range basis. Too often our attitude toward Argentina has been governed by immediate problems without recognizing their transitory importance, whereas fundamental factors, which will affect both our political and economic relations for years to come, have been overlooked or disregarded until they develop to the point where they become immediate issues. An example is the singling out of Argentina as the only country in Latin America to be classified as an "E" country and as such subject to all kinds of export controls, when all the other Latin American countries were freed of these,

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except insofar as quota controls on articles in short supply applied to all countries on an equitable basis.

The question has been raised as to whether the United States could have justified this position had Argentina protested against the discrimination on the basis of Article 3 of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation of 1853. Certainly the measure was resented in Argentina and is doubtless one of the contributing factors to the prevalent belief among high government officials that a conscious effort is being made in the United States to restrict exports to Argentina and place difficulties in the way of the present Government. The measure actually has succeeded in irritating Argentine officials and has directly favored our foreign competitors by forcing Argentina to seek other sources of supply.

Likewise of great importance is our approach to problems which arise in our relations with Argentina. Too often the impression has been gained that the United States takes an arbitrary, and sometimes an unreasonable point of view, based on its own particular interests rather than on the interests of both countries. There is frequently the feeling that there is lack of consideration of the susceptibilities of the Argentines and that we are prone to be domineering in our approach. (This undoubtedly arises in part from a supersensitiveness on the part of the Argentines, but this trait should be recognized to avoid insofar as possible unnecessary friction.)

While not of immediate urgency, the question of Argentine meat is a basic problem of major importance and it will eventually come up and must be fairly and honestly faced as a fundamental step in improving our relations with Argentina. The problem is too involved to discuss here, but there is little question but that it has been handled badly in the past. In fact there are some features with respect to our handling of the problem which apparently justify a question on the part of the Argentines as to whether we have acted in strictly good faith in our treatment of the matter. Generally speaking, I think, the United States enjoys a reputation for fair dealing and any questionable tactics cannot fail to have serious repercussions.

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The character of the Argentine people should be more fully understood if difficulties are to be avoided. There is a marked arrogance in the character of the people and they publicly proclaim their superiority over the other nations of South America. They feel that they should be considered the leaders in South America and doubtless would like to dominate the continent. They are content to let the United States hold the dominant position in North America, but strongly resent any act or public statement by the United States Government or its officials which can be interpreted as coercion. Politicians have for many years used the "threat" of "the colossus of the North" and "Yankee Imperialism" to gain popular support and as a means of fostering a nationalistic spirit. Anything which in the slightest degree suggests intervention or interference on the part of the United States in the internal affairs of Argentina, or any part of Latin America for that matter, is immediately seized upon and magnified, frequently far beyond its importance.

There is no question but that Argentina failed to support the democratic principles in the recent struggle against totalitarianism. While Argentina claimed to take a neutral position, various acts were clearly favorable to the Axis and there is even evidence of support for the cause from some quarters. Argentina's attitude appears to have been based principally on (1) materialistic considerations and (2) a desire to be on the winning side (a common Latin characteristic). As the fortunes of war changed, sentiment in Argentina tended to swing from the Axis. While the foregoing considerations do not, of course, justify Argentina's action, they do, at least in part, explain it.

The foregoing outlines some of the factors which must be carefully considered if there is to be a permanent betterment in our relations with Argentina. There are, of course, many other factors bearing on the subject and in seeking a solution to the present unsatisfactory status of our relations all aspects of the problem should be carefully studied and analyzed.

The Immediate

The Immediate Problem

Since our entry into the war, there has been considerable variation in our policy toward Argentina, which at times has apparently been influenced in no small part by the British attitude. At times we have taken an extremely "tough" attitude, at others we have given the appearance of "appeasement". There are many who feel that when we have been "tough" we have fought a lone hand, that as a result our prestige has suffered severely, that we have alienated many of those Argentines who were really our friends, that we have helped to cement Anglo-Argentine relations, etc.

It was generally hoped that the resumption of relations between the United States and Argentina in the spring of 1945 would result in at least a renewal of "normal" relations. Unfortunately this has not resulted. Throughout 1945 our relations were continuously in a highly strained state. This situation continued in 1946 until after the elections. Many of the speeches of Mr. Braden, as Ambassador and as Assistant Secretary of State, were interpreted in certain quarters as interference in the internal affairs of Argentina. As evidence of this take the slogan "Perón ó Braden" which was so extensively used in the election campaign. The publication of the "Blue Book" was also regarded by many as interference in internal affairs, as possibly a threat by the United States against Argentina and the time of publication was regarded by some as a last effort of the United States to prevent the election of Perón. Many of the trade control measures adopted by the United States during the fall of 1945 and spring of 1946 were discriminatory and were regarded as coercive. They were strongly resented by many Argentines. Applied on a uni-lateral basis, as they were, they were completely ineffective, and only caused ill-will. These measures have now been abandoned, except those relating to the exportation of arms and munitions of war, but they succeeded in firmly establishing the belief in the minds of many high officials that the United States is attempting to deprive Argentina of its essential requirements. The opinion still persists and until materials

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now in short supply become abundant, any difficulty -- due to labor conditions or anything else -- in obtaining a specific product will be attributed to our innate dislike for Argentina and particularly for the Perón Government.

Statements by our Government officials and press releases given out by the Department of State, if they have not furthered the impression that we dislike Argentina, clearly indicate that we intend to force them to comply with standards established by us. Not only have our official statements been of an irritating character but many of them have actually made it more difficult for Argentine officials to meet our desires, assuming that they sincerely desired to meet us at least half way.

Argentina is a sovereign state and the character and temperament of the people is such that they do not like to be told what they should or should not do. Politicians are pretty much alike the world over and no politician can last long if he obviously yields to demands from foreign interests and sacrifices the prestige of his own country. Even with a real desire on the part of the Argentine Government to meet the wishes of the United States with respect to (1) Axis institutions, (2) enemy aliens, and (3) enemy property, the constantly nagging statements from Washington make the problem more difficult for the Argentine officials. If the practice is continued it may be well-nigh impossible for the Argentine officials to carry through their program without loss of prestige in their own country and the possibility of being accused of yielding to foreign pressure. It seems to me that the Washington approach to the problem is definitely wrong and one which can only result in a further serious deterioration of our relations with Argentina.

It is perfectly evident to anyone who has been in Buenos Aires for the past year or eighteen months that since your arrival there has been a complete change in the official attitude of the Argentine Government toward the American Ambassador. It is quite clear that your direct approach and frank discussion of the United States position and obstacles in the United States which make the resumption of completely normal relations difficult

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has done much to dispel the animosity and distrust which previously existed. The fact that no public statements have been made locally regarding the immediate problems has made it easier for the local authorities to proceed with the execution of such measures as will establish Argentina's compliance to its international commitments. Statements and press releases which have been made in the United States have made the work more difficult.

It may be that even this approach will fail and Argentina may ultimately decide on a non-cooperative policy, but it seems to me that an approach which tends to inspire confidence has much more hope of success than one which consistently irritates and creates distrust.

The problem has reached the point where it seems that there should be a reappraisal of our aims with respect to our relations with Argentina. If the premise that our goal should be to have our relations on a completely cordial and cooperative basis, with full collaboration among the American republics is correct, then careful consideration should be given first to the obstacles which stand in the way of attaining this goal and second to the methods to be followed in removing them.

It is obvious that the principal immediate obstacle from the standpoint of our Government is the failure of Argentina to meet satisfactorily its international commitments with respect to (1) Axis controlled institutions, (2) enemy aliens, and (3) enemy property. The impression is gained from many statements emanating from Washington that Argentina is on trial and that the United States will be the sole judge as to whether Argentina sufficiently meets her international commitments to be permitted to join with the other American republics in attempting to solve the problems of mutual interest to the Western Hemisphere. There have been indications that arbitrary conditions are being established and that meeting these will be a "sine qua non" to the resumption of normal relations.

The method of procedure to be followed to eliminate existing obstacles is most important. The policy now being followed in Washington and that being

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followed in Buenos Aires are exactly opposite. A decision should be promptly reached as to which offers the greater possibility of success, without sacrificing the prestige of the United States, and the other should be immediately abandoned.

At the same time, careful consideration should be given to the possibility of failure to eliminate the existing obstacles by either of the two methods and the results of such failure. It is conceivable that if arbitrary standards of compliance with international commitments are established, Argentina may not be able to meet them completely within the existing constitutional and legal limitations of the country. A continuation of the constant prodding and irritating public insistence that Argentina must substantially comply with its international commitments may create a situation which will force Argentina to abandon its avowed intention to eliminate Axis interest. Under these conditions, what then could be the attitude of the United States?

While your approach to the problem may also fail to achieve all that is desired, it seems to me that it offers far greater possibilities of success. It has the further advantage that the door is not shut if the present efforts fail, as would seem to be the case in a policy which constantly creates a feeling of animosity.

It is only logical that Argentina should desire friendly and close relationship with the United States. Argentina fully realizes that the United States is the most powerful nation in the world today and, if for no other reason, I believe that it would welcome close cooperation rather than the reverse. I believe that if our Government could meet the Argentine Government half way in an understanding, and at the same time in a dignified way, the chances of success would be good. In any event, the procedure which you have been following leaves a certain flexibility to the action which is possible for our Government to take in the future if the efforts to secure full compliance are not successful.

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If the present unsatisfactory relations continue or become suddenly aggravated, it seems to me that we are driving Argentina to seek, for self protection if for no other reason, alliances with other nations in Latin America or elsewhere. The consequences of a complete breakdown in our relations with Argentina at this time would be so great that it seems obvious that this cannot be permitted. A prompt decision is essential for no time should be lost, if continental solidarity is to be maintained, in securing normal relations between the United States and Argentina.

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