

1571
AIR MAIL COURIER

Edw. C. Wells

CONFIDENTIAL

México, D.F., June 10, 1943

Dear Sumner:

I have to refer to my letter to you of June 7 and to my two letters of June 8 with reference to the recognition of the new government in Argentina. I now have to send you herewith a copy of a despatch which I have written today, No. 10,704, to the Department.

I want to give you the following further information. As soon as Duggan reached me on the telephone this morning, I got in touch with Dr. Padilla and called on him at his house. I told him about my conversation with Duggan and about the instructions which we had sent to our Ambassador in Buenos Aires authorizing him, if his other American colleagues had appropriate instructions, to acknowledge the Argentine note he had received of June 8, which would recognize the new government. I said that the decision which we had reached had been made with a great deal of difficulty, but that I thought he would appreciate that, in view of the circumstances, it seemed to be the only thing we could do, and that we could not wait longer. I said that the action of Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and Paraguay, had made it difficult for the other states of Latin America to withhold action and that under the circumstances, we had decided to go along.

Dr. Padilla said that he realized the situation thoroughly. He said that in view of the close contact between high military officials in the Argentine and in Brazil and in Chile, it was exceedingly difficult for those governments not to give recognition. In view of the fact that some of the governments had come into existence in the same way as the new Argentine Government, it made the situation all the more difficult so far as the maintenance of solidarity in action was concerned, with respect to the new Argentine Government. It was all regrettable, because he felt that if reserve had been maintained, it would have had a very favorable effect.

The Honorable
Sumner Welles,
Under Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

effect. The only thing to do was to make the best of a bad business. The most important thing for the present was the maintenance of solidarity; there were many things to which we had to come slowly and painfully, and at least we would be maintaining solidarity of action among the 20 republics. He again referred to the fact that there were some things which could not be accomplished in a day and we had to go through some pain, especially to arrive at the democratic procedures which so many of us desired.

Dr. Padilla said that he was about to go to see President Avila Camacho and that undoubtedly this afternoon or tomorrow he would receive the Argentine Minister in the Foreign Office, according to his request, and that this was equivalent to Mexico's recognition of the new Argentine Government. He said that the Argentine Ambassador here, who is, as you know, a very stupid and presumptuous person, had been insisting on seeing him all day yesterday, and that he had to have the word passed to him that he could not receive him, as the Mexican Government had not yet determined upon its course of action with respect to the new Argentine Government. He said the Argentine Ambassador was furious, and made quite a scene, and insisted on seeing him. He had passed word to the Ambassador that he would be quite ready to see him personally and unofficially, and the Argentine Ambassador did come to see him in this personal and unofficial way. Padilla said the Ambassador was rather arrogant and difficult. He said that he told Candiotti, the Argentine Ambassador, very directly and definitely that he would not receive him officially until his government had made up its mind as to whether to continue its diplomatic relations with the Argentine under the Estrada Declaration. He said that his government was following the developments in the Argentine very carefully, and up to the present it had not been able to determine what the attitudes of the new government would be in either American or international matters, and particularly with respect to breaking with the Axis. Padilla told Candiotti that the Mexican Government must be given its own time to reach a decision, and that he could not be pressed into anything. Candiotti made some very foolish remarks, which it is not necessary to repeat here, but which did not help the situation. Among other things, he wanted to know whether the United States Government was not endeavoring to influence the other American Governments not to give recognition, and Padilla told Candiotti that his government had received no communication whatever from our government with respect to the matter. He made it clear to Candiotti, however, that he thought it quite

proper

proper that the American Governments should consult with each other, and that common action by the American Governments was desirable and necessary.

Candioti then went on to tell Padilla that he was sure that the new government would break with the Axis, collaborate fully with the other American states, et cetera. He had, however, no basis that he could give to Padilla for such assurances.

Padilla said that he made it clear when Candioti left him that he would not receive him as Argentine Ambassador until the Mexican Government had made its decision; he hoped that the attitude of the new government would be such that the Mexican Government could have relations with it. He emphasized again that he did not wish the Ambassador to seek an audience until the Mexican Government had made its decision.

Padilla said that he would see the President almost immediately and that in view of developments, he saw no way other than for him to receive the Argentine late today or tomorrow, which would be equivalent to recognition of the new government.

Padilla spoke very understandingly of our own position and he is thoroughly understanding of the whole situation. I think if it were not for the question of maintaining solidarity, Mexico would have delayed what is the equivalent of recognition, for her. I think the President and Padilla feel very strongly that this is a military government which has no intention of giving way to a civil government. I think they feel very strongly that the Argentine situation and the recognition of the new government may at least facilitate similar developments in some of the other countries. I think the President and Padilla hope as strongly as we do that this may not come about, but they realize that it is a very real possibility.

Padilla said that unquestionably the President of Chile had postponed his trip again, as under the circumstances he could not possibly leave the country, as it would be an invitation for a military coup in Chile.

Padilla was very philosophical about the whole thing, but was obviously quite depressed. He views the whole development as a severe setback in many ways. I think he believes there is some possibility, even probability, that the new government may break with the Axis, but that

it

it will only do it in a half-hearted sort of way, and in an endeavor to gain certain advantages and to regain certain prestige. He is bearing in mind, however, very much the fact that the high officials of the Argentine Army are definitely pro-Nazi, and that the new government is almost completely a military dictatorship. Out of such a situation, he feels that one can get nothing but lip service and that the new situation is far worse in many respects than the former one.

My own personal impression is that the developments in every respect are practically a catastrophe, and that there is no telling what the repercussions eventually may be in many ways. We can only hope for the best, but I do not see how the best can be any too good. It is a severe setback to democratic institutions, and I think a severe setback to all of our policies. All we have maintained is a semblance of solidarity, with a lot of disadvantages in the background. The new government is now practically free to do what it chooses, and even if a civil government is set up, it will be under conditions which will mean the perpetuation of a situation in the Argentine which is a setback to democratic institutions. So far as a really free and collaborative attitude of this military government, or of a civil government which it may set up is concerned, I have no illusions whatever, and if we have been obliged to take this step of recognition, I do not think that it implies that we have to accord to this government that good faith which we should be able to give to that of a sister republic. I think in all of our dealings with the new government we shall have to exercise many and real reservations, or we shall be decreasing our own strength and that of the other American Republics, and definitely lessening our own prestige. Every one of these other republics is going to be watching what we are going to do for the Argentine, and if we deal with her on a basis of full faith, we will not be helping our own situation with these other republics, or their own situations internally.

I know what concern this whole problem has given to you all at home.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

GSW/aw

G. B. Messersmith