

✓
1854
AIR MAIL

Buenos Aires, February 26, 1947

SECRET

Dear Bill:

I have your secret letter of February 14 acknowledging my letter of February 7 and the copy of letters which I wrote to the Secretary and Spruille Braden.

I note with much interest that you had a talk with a man who is thoroughly familiar with the Argentine and who believes that an early settlement of the Argentine difficulties will work in the interest of the United States and the entire hemisphere. I note that this man was critical of our policy during the last year-and-a-half and believes that great damage has been done to the Good Neighbor policy. You state, however, that he indicated a word of warning which you think I should have.

I have noted with much interest that this man stated that in spite of the feeling he has on this subject, as expressed above, he believes it very important at this particular stage not to rush into a settlement too quickly; that he expressed the opinion that a few weeks should elapse after I felt that compliance had been carried through before our Government would formally indicate that it so recognized that compliance had been accomplished. I note that this man stated that he did not believe that President Perón personally would feel triumphant or cocky, but that some of the lesser lights might take advantage of the situation to further damage Argentine-United States relationships.

I appreciate very much your writing me. It is difficult to evaluate completely the information and opinion which this man expressed to you without knowing his

nationality and

The Honorable
William D. Pawley,
American Ambassador,
Rio de Janeiro.

SECRET

SECRET

- 2 -

nationality and background. In view, however, of what you say in the last paragraph of your letter, I am particularly appreciative of your sending this information to me, and the following comment may be of interest.

There is a common conception that President Perón feels that he has a personal quarrel with Spruille Braden. I am informed that there are many who think that Spruille Braden feels that he has a very definite quarrel with President Perón. So far as I am concerned, I am only able to judge one side of this for I have not discussed this matter at any time with Spruille Braden.

From the side of President Perón, however, I can say the following. I have seen a great deal of him since I am in the Argentine. During the first conversation which I had with him shortly after my arrival, he discussed various matters in connection with our relationships and spoke very frankly. In that long three-hour conversation, he mentioned Spruille Braden once, and it was when he said something like the following.

"I should tell you frankly, Mr. Ambassador, that there is one point on which I and most of my countrymen feel very strongly, and that is the intervention of the American Embassy and Mr. Braden in our last election. As an Argentine, I must resent Mr. Braden's intervention in our internal affairs and in the election; as Juan Perón, I am deeply grateful to him."

All the details of that three-hour conversation are still very clear to me as though it were yesterday, and if President Perón had any strong feelings with respect to Spruille Braden, he did not show them and the only reference he made to him in that conversation was the one above indicated.

The only other occasion when I recall President Perón making any reference to Mr. Braden was when we had a conversation on the freedom of the press and he referred to a conversation which he had had with Spruille Braden on that same subject and which conversation had proved to be rather unpleasant.

I do

SECRET

SECRET

- 3 -

I do not doubt but what President Perón has really strong feelings not only with regard to what he calls our intervention in the elections but also with regard to Spruille Braden himself. If he has these feelings, he has, as I have above indicated, not shown them. Another thing that I feel very sure of and that is that if he does have strong feelings on the subject he would not permit them in any way to interfere with our relations. There is no doubt that he knows something concerning the world situation and is concerned over it and that he believes very strongly in close collaboration by the Argentine with us. He has shown this in the most definite ways. He realizes that who is Assistant Secretary of State for American Republics Affairs or who is in any other position of our Government is a matter of our concern, just as the same situation in the Argentine would be a matter of their concern. I know that he has this attitude because I have been told by reliable persons in close contact with him that he has made this statement. Any idea, therefore, that President Perón would feel a composition of our relationships a victory over us or over any individual is, I believe, very far-fetched. That he would feel highly satisfied with a composition of the situation, there is no doubt for he believes it would be in the interests of his country, and I think he believes it would be in the interests of the hemisphere. If he did not believe this, he would not be working so hard to bring about that composition. As a matter of fact, for a Latin, he has gone very far in practically humiliating himself in order to bring about this composition and has made his task with a lot of people in the Argentine more difficult by his attitude in this respect.

With respect to the opinion expressed by the man with whom you talked that some lesser lights in the Argentine would consider the solution of our problems a victory for them and make them feel cocky, I do not doubt this at all, but there are irresponsible elements of that kind in every country.

How an announcement of the complete liquidation of the situation between the Argentine and ourselves could damage United States-Argentine relationships, I am not able to understand. I am not able to follow the thinking

of the

SECRET

1854

SECRET

- 4 -

of the man with whom you talked in this respect.

That we cannot rush into any settlement of the situation, I think is quite obvious, but on the other hand, that we should delay the settlement once the Argentine has adequately complied with her obligations would, I believe, be extremely unhappy and improper and not worthy of us. So far as schools and institutions are concerned, she has done the job and done it well. So far as property is concerned, she has done as much if not more than the other American countries. So far as aliens are concerned, she is certainly making much more of an effort than most of the American countries have done. When she has taken appropriate action with regard to those against whom proved information is really available, I cannot see any reason for delaying action. I believe that our position as a great country and as one which stands for certain principles of justice and equity is such that we must act always with understanding and with generosity.

I think you may be sure that I would not recommend any precipitate action by our Government. On the other hand, I believe that the situation is one which must be liquidated by us just as soon as the basis therefor exists. I think with this you will be in complete accord.

I appreciate very much your letter.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and sincerely yours,

George S. Messersmith

SECRET