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Buenos Aires, Argentina  
March 12, 1947

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Dear Sumner:

I have your letter of March 3 acknowledging mine of February 20 and February 26. There is so much that I should like to write you that I do not know where to begin. Unfortunately, while I have good help here, there is in the very nature of things so much that I have to do myself because so much of the contact with the Government has to be through me, and I am exceedingly pressed.

You refer to the speech by O'Konski. I quite agree with you. Pattee is one of the best informed and most intelligent of present day students of inter-American relationships, and the speech on the whole was excellent and even though too long, I think it will get a certain amount of attention at home. The very fact that it was made, I think, has had a certain effect.

I agree with you that the only real solution, until General Marshall is able to go into the whole subject fully, is for the Foreign Relations or Foreign Affairs Committees to undertake on their own initiative an investigation of the whole subject. I think that both Committees would be inclined to do this, but it has certain inconveniences. An investigation by a Committee of the Congress always involves hearings of all kinds of people and it means the opportunity for all kinds of people to get their views on the record, and very often the zealots get more space in the newspapers than the people who really are objective and understanding and know what it is all about. I feel confident that the overwhelming membership of both the Senate and House Committees wants a composition of this situation and that their attitude is sound and constructive. I have no doubt, therefore,

as to

The Honorable  
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as to what the outcome of any investigation undertaken by the Foreign Relations or Foreign Affairs Committees would be.

On the other hand, I think the President and General Marshall would probably be very sensitive with respect to any independent investigation undertaken by either Committee, and that is why I have hoped and still hope that it will be done by the Department, and of course that means that it must be done by General Marshall himself.

So far as the Department is concerned, I feel certain that Spruille Braden has taken so definite a stand that he feels his prestige and position are involved, and I do not see him changing his position no matter what the Argentine does to meet her obligations. This is saying a good deal, and I say it with regret, but I think it is so for I see indications that now the Argentine has done the necessary with respect to schools and institutions and property and is going to complete the program with respect to enemy aliens against whom there is real evidence, there will be a tendency on his part to raise other questions, and perhaps also to question the adequacy of what the Argentine is doing. In other words, I see Spruille in a situation where he just can't see his way clear to any composition of the situation, and this continued fault-finding with what the Argentine has done in the way of compliance is bound to create, as it is already creating, a situation of frustration here which will lead to most unhappy consequences.

So far as Dean is concerned, I feel that he has not given adequate study to this matter because he has so much to do, and he seems to be completely in accord with what Spruille is doing. There is, I think, however something more fundamental, and that is that for some reason I think Dean does not like me, and why that should be, I do not know, but I think it is not impossible that that has something to do with it.

So far as Will Clayton is concerned, he is thoroughly understanding of the situation, in every respect, and I am sure that he would like to see it cleaned up today. His views are very constructive and sound, but there are in his part of the departmental organization certain people

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who are still fighting the war with the Argentine although they realize that it is over with the enemies which we fought on the land and in the air and on the seas and under the seas. Will himself is so tremendously occupied that I do not know how much initiative he has taken in this matter or could take.

The long and short of it is that as far as the Department is concerned, the cards are stacked against any arrangement with the Argentine no matter what she does until General Marshall is able to give it his attention. I have for General Marshall the highest respect. I know, as you do, that he has been interested in inter-American problems for many years, and he has a good understanding of them, but naturally he has been away from Washington for a year and has to catch up. I realized when I was in Washington that he would not be able to give this matter the attention he would wish to give to it before going to Moscow, and as I see it, the situation with which we are confronted is such in the world picture that unless he takes time out on his return to go into this problem, he may not be able to give attention to it for some time.

Unfortunately the situation has been permitted to become so complicated by all sorts of extraneous factors that in order to form a conclusion which is sound and in our interests, it will be necessary to take into account all sorts of factors, and it will be necessary for General Marshall to go into a good deal that has happened in the last year to get a real picture. If he should do that, and I am inclined to doubt whether he will ever find the time to do it, there is no doubt as to what his action and attitude would be for he would be completely disgusted and exceedingly disturbed about some of the things which have happened.

*in all the detail necessary for full understanding*

Of course, the situation is that the Argentine has not yet completed her program of action with regard to enemy aliens against whom there is evidence. With what she has done in the way of deportations and repatriations and with this last list of 52 in the decree with which you are familiar, she will have really done the job, and in my opinion, more thoroughly than any one of the other American republics south of the Rio Grande. Of these 52 on which action is pending, 13 have already been deported and are in Germany. There remain, therefore, these 39. The Argentine Government is making the most extraordinary

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efforts to get these. Among them are some of the people who were really most active and are a sort of symbol such as Becker. They have already got some of these people and are keeping them quietly in seclusion for if it were known that the Government had them under arrest, the lawyers would get writs of habeas corpus for them and the whole search would have to start over again.

I know what the Argentine Government is doing. They are using every means at their disposal--police, special organizations, etc.--to find these people. You know that the Argentine is a big country and how easy it is for people to get to out of the way places where it is almost impossible to find them. How many of them they are going to be able to get with the best effort that any one could put forward, and they are putting it forward, I do not know, but I know they will get every one who can be found. Some of them may have already been able to get to the South of Chile or perhaps to Southern Brazil and have merged their identities into another, and they may never be found.

My attitude is that in the very near future we have got to recognize that the Argentine has done everything that can be expected, and when they send out the ones they have been able to get, that we will recognize the effort and clear up the situation. This is the stand which I am going to take when the next lot is deported. It will not mean that when this next lot is deported the efforts of the Argentine Government will cease in finding them, but certainly we cannot hold up such important matters as the composition of our relationships and the defense meeting, etc., because a few people cannot be found. We have the same situation at home and in every one of the other American countries, and I do not see how we can apply this special treatment to the Argentine.

I feel confident that before General Marshall returns the next lot will be deported, and then I think we have our last chance to compose this situation. What I fear is that certain people will endeavor to raise questions about other matters. There are some die-hards who will say that the Argentine, no matter what it does, is a Fascist state, and all sorts of things, and that she is a threat to the hemisphere. What policy and what final action such people have in mind I can't figure out, but there are so many things I can't figure out about the attitude of cer-

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tain people on the Argentine problem that I confess there are those about whom I am frankly at a loss.

If it were not that I am so convinced of the importance of this matter, I would resign and take things easily, as I should, perhaps, for my own sake and for my wife's sake. I am not going to do that for the issue is too great and if I were to retire from the picture, it would carry a significance to many good people at home and to all good people in the other American republics which would be very real, not because of myself, but because of the problem, and I cannot take that risk.

I am still hopeful, therefore, that General Marshall on his return will find that the Argentine has taken adequate action on the basis of what I have reported and clear up the situation definitely. In case the circumstances are such that he cannot give his attention, or it is not given attention, then I think the only solution is for the Senate and House Committees to undertake the investigation on their own. I am hoping that this can be avoided for it can create a lot of discussion.

One of the terrible factors about this problem is that every time we seem to be on the way, something happens to upset the apple cart. The unfortunate visit of this labor delegation and their report at home is going to cause a lot of trouble, and all unnecessarily. The Argentine Government should never have invited them and the delegates should never have come, and I saw this from the outset but there was nothing I could do to stop it. Anything I would have done to stop it would have been misunderstood.

I think you remember Norman Littell in Washington. He is a good friend, and I know has very high regard for you. When I was in Washington I saw quite a good deal of him and spent several nights at his home as I could get away from things there and rest. He is very much interested in this problem, and I am sending you for your personal information a copy of a letter which I have written him because it covers some aspects of this labor delegation.

The thing about this report which is really upsetting Argentines, both in and out of the Government, is the press dispatch which came down several days before the

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report was published at home that the labor delegates were going in to see Spruille Braden before they issued the report. Whether they did or not and whether Spruille did anything to influence the character of the report and what they put in it or left out does not make any difference here, of course. The papers here are simply full again of the old Braden business and things which everybody here wanted to forget are being covered on the front page in headlines during the last days. It is most unfortunate. It is a repetition of the episode of the Higgins letters all over again, only perhaps worse. I am fearful that the publication of this report is going to start another series of editorials at home which will not be helpful.

I note with interest what you say concerning Drew Pearson, and I have always felt that Drew had no bias in this matter but that it was just a question of the information which he got, and I think I have an idea of some of the information which was fed to him and of the people who fed it, and he had reason to believe that the information should be accurate. I am very glad to know you had this opportunity to talk with him.

I quite agree with you that Aranha's presence in the United States will be most helpful. He is really a great figure and the things which he has said in the last days have been most helpful.

It is good of you to say what you do about me, and I appreciate your confidence as I appreciated and knew how to value it in the past when we were working together so closely. The obstacles are tremendous, and the principal obstacle is that in the Department itself the cards are so stacked against any solution. So far as the President is concerned, I am confident that he has a constructive view on the matter and wants it settled. I am sure that General Marshall, when he has the time to inform himself, will have the same attitude, but I agree with you that the problems which he has before him are so pressing that it is difficult to know just when he will be able to go into the matter.

One thing I do know and that is that we cannot delay action much longer. It is getting to the point in the Argentine where there is frustration among the higher officials. They are doing everything they can, and they

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have humiliated themselves to a considerable degree. There is a limit to the time which this can last, and I am fearful we are reaching that time limit; that is why I am so concerned and why I feel something must be done before long. If the solution does not come soon after the return of General Marshall, I fear it will be too late and we will have then a consolidation of a most unhappy situation so far as the Argentine is concerned, and I fear that the sympathy of every one of the American republics is going to be with her and that our whole structure will get a shock which I doubt if it can withstand. In the times in which we are, this would be a calamity.

This is a very disjointed letter, but I have tried to dictate it under the pressure of a good deal of work as I wanted to get these thoughts to you, and I did want you to know how deeply I appreciate what you are doing in this matter. I cannot think of anything which is more helpful in the picture at this time.

With all good wishes to you and Mrs. Welles in which Marion joins,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

Enclosure:

Copy of letter to  
Mr. Norman Littell

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