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AIR MAIL
ORIGINAL

GSM:clp

Buenos Aires, March 28, 1947

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Dear Mac:

I am sending you herewith a copy of a despatch no. 2137 of March 26, with reference to the press situation in the Argentine and it should be considered in connection with our despatch no. 2048 of March 13, 1947, entitled "Comment on Washington Post Article of January 31, 1947, and With General Reference to Freedom of the Press in the Argentine".

Both these despatches are very long, but they cover a very important situation, and I hope that they may be given careful reading in the Department, and I am sure that you will wish to be familiar with the contents of both.

What I want to make clear is that in spite of what you have seen in the papers and in spite of some of the comment, there is today complete freedom of the press in the Argentine in the sense that in spite of these indirect attacks, the freedom of the press remains undisturbed. The situation, however, is one which is not happy, and I am afraid that there is some reason on both sides. We have lots of things to occupy our attention here, but there is no matter to which I and my associates give more careful attention than this matter of the press, and I need not tell you that we realize the importance of it, and I can assure you that the Argentine Government realizes the importance of it. There have been mistakes both by the Government and by the newspapers.

I am

The Honorable
Michael J. McDermott,
Special Assistant to the Secretary,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

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I am sure that Arthur Sulzberger of the New York Times is very much interested in this situation, and I have had a brief letter from him recently transmitting some clippings referring to this action of the newspaper venders and the alleged action of the Government. I am merely writing him a word and telling him that we have sent these two despatches to the Department and that so far as I am concerned, I have no objection to Arthur Krock or Hulen or Arthur Sulzberger himself seeing a copy of each of these despatches. As a matter of fact, as it is so important that a great paper like the Times have an understanding of what the situation really is and what some of the factors are which have to be kept in mind, I would like very much for Arthur Sulzberger and whomever he indicates having access to a copy of these two despatches.

For me there is nothing more important than this matter of the freedom of the press, but it is a complicated problem and involves many factors and very often, and particularly in Latin countries, it is difficult for us at home to realize and to keep in due perspective some of the factors. In certain matters, and I am not speaking of news content or editorial comment, newspapers can be as arbitrary as governments and can have the same passions and prejudices.

I am confident that the complete freedom of the press will be maintained in the Argentine if it is not complicated by unhappy factors which can easily arise and which I know that the Government here is trying to keep down. It realizes the importance of the complete freedom of the press.

I will keep the Department informed.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

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