

1741
23 October 1945

Memorandum to: Mr. Oakley

Subject: Comments on "The Case Against Argentina in Mexico."

From: Office of the Military Attaché.

Section IV, Exhibit VI, of the Case Against Argentina, prepared for the Mexico City Conference and dealing with the militarization of Argentina along Fascist-totalitarian lines, has been examined with much interest. Its reading suggests a number of comments that will be considered hereinunder.

It is claimed that Argentina's military preparations are such that they give evidence of aggressive designs tantamount to preparation for war. Although this may have appeared somewhat alarming a year ago, this fear was in many respects more apparent than real. If it is true that Argentina was expanding her army substantially, her neighbors, particularly Brazil and Chile, were also. Moreover, even such small countries as Paraguay have improved their armies immeasurably through the receipt of modern tanks, guns, etc., from the United States under lend lease. It is only natural that Argentina should have felt compelled to maintain her position in the hemisphere by "keeping up with the Joneses."

It is stated on page 2c that Argentina during 1945 would call up enough conscripts to have an army of 200,000. This simply does not square with the facts. Our best estimates reveal that this country does not have an army of more than 105,000. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the last message of civilian President CASTILLO to Congress, 25 May 1943, spoke of the goal of an army of 130,000 as the country's ultimate objective for national defense, the idea being 1% of the total population.

Page 2, D & E, speak of the strategic disposition of troops along Argentina's borders and the expansion of military installations along such frontiers. This does not necessarily reveal aggressive intentions but rather plans for the country's defense.

While it is true that the army was outspokenly pro-Axis, that is no longer true. Moreover, that condition cannot surprise anyone too much, if it is remembered that hundreds of Argentina's officers have studied in Germany,

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that their training is entirely German, and that on the other hand not more than a dozen officers have ever studied in the United States. The Nazis may have done a good job on the Argentine Army but they were sowing their doctrinal seed on extremely fertile soil that had been carefully prepared over a long period of years by German military influence.

Page 8 speaks of the production of 360 medium tanks, as well as that of 160 light tanks. It is believed that Argentina has not produced any more tanks than the dozen that paraded along Buenos Aires streets on 9 July 1944. Although page 8 then goes on to admit that not more than fifty are in exist-ence, Page 15 (8) refers to the allocation of hundreds of tanks to the Army.

Page 17 refers to the defamatory campaign conducted against the memory of SARMIENTO and MITRE. At the time the report was written that was true but is no longer so. Thus the Public Minitary Bulletin of 27 September 1945 carries the text of a decree establishing "Teachers' Day", designed to honor SARMIENTO.

On page 19 it is said that Colonel PERON since he came into power has gradually replaced pro-Allied officers with Axis sympathizers. It is believed that it would perhaps be more accurate to say that, in so far as possible, he replaced all officers that were not unconditional supporters of his by those that are.

This same page refers to Lt. Colonel AGUIRRE and Brigadier DE LA COLINA as being anti-American. It is felt that neither can be so classified. It is also stated that General BASSI was an admirer of the Third Reich and received a Fascist decoration. That he should have received an Italian decoration would not appear to be particularly significant. After all, as democratic an officer as General ESPINDOLA received a Nazi decoration, even though he returned it about a year and a half ago. It is not believed that General BASSI was pro-Nazi and he was not so classified by this office.

Page 20 refers to the fact that field officers (probably mean troop commanders) are less pro-Axis than administrative officers. On what basis this distinction has been made is not known, but it is not believed that such a distinction can be made.

In general

In general, it may be said that since 15 February 1945, date of Exhibit VI, the strength of Argentina's Army has remained more or less static. The armament program has tapered off and so has the military installation building program.

Exhibit I contains a section (F) on the Militarization of Argentina on Fascist-totalitarian lines. Considerable space is devoted to describing the tremendous quantities of armaments and munitions manufactured by Argentina. The figures mentioned for the most part can only be classified as fantastic and ridiculous. They have no relation at all with reality. A few examples will suffice, e.g., 1,150 75-mm guns, five tanks a day, etc. This information resembles the false and misleading reports fabricated in Montevideo by Communist and German Black Front sources for the purpose of embarrassing the present Argentine régime.

S. D.

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