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Buenos Aires, April 3, 1947

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Dear Dean:

I have just received the Department's secret telegram no. 252 of April 2, 1947, 6 p.m., (for my secret information) informing me of the President's invitation to Ambassador Ivanesevich to call at the White House on March 31 and at which time he was received by the President, Senators Vandenberg and Connally, and yourself. I have noted with much interest the contents of the Department's telegram and am deeply appreciative of this step which has been taken by the President as I am confident that it will prove to be most helpful. The initiative which has been taken in this matter at this time is, I am sure, most constructive and I would like the President and you to know how grateful I am for this initiative.

It so happens that I have just forwarded a secret despatch to the Department no. 2119 of March 31, 1947 entitled "Conversation with the Foreign Minister" in which I go into this whole matter of compliance rather fully and bring to the attention of the Department some considerations which I thought should be before it without further delay. I transmitted a copy of this despatch to the Department addressed to Secretary Marshall with a covering letter to the Secretary dated March 31 and I transmitted a copy of the despatch and of the letter to Secretary Marshall to you under the same date. As this despatch has an important bearing on this whole matter, it is my hope that you will be able to read it. It was not my intention by this despatch to precipitate any decisions by the Department as I am still awaiting

the results

The Honorable
Dean Acheson,
Acting Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

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the results of the really serious action which the Argentine Government is taking to secure the remainder of these aliens so as to clean up this matter, but I did think that the information should be there for your information.

I noted with a good deal of surprise as I am sure you all did that the Argentine Ambassador in reply to the President's statement concerning these aliens asserted that it was a calumny to say that there were Nazis in the Argentine and that the President must be referring to some Argentine citizens whose cases were in the courts. I feel quite sure that Ivanessevich was completely honest in this reaction but it is an indication how badly he has been informed or rather inadequately by his Government. This, I am sorry to say, is nothing unusual in the case of a good many of these governments and it is one of the reasons why some of these Chiefs of Mission of the American republics in Washington so inadequately express the thoughts of their own Government there on occasion. Ivanessevich is a great surgeon and a great diagnostician. He is a man of very fine social sense and sense of public service. He is an extremely sensitive person even for an Argentine. He accepted this post as he thought he could render a service to his country and because he is really interested in the relationships between the two countries. He left Buenos Aires for Washington about the end of July last year or in the first days of August and has not been here since. It seems incredible, however, that he should be so inadequately informed on this particular question and particularly as the present Argentine Government has been giving such constant and serious attention to the matter of schools and institutions and propaganda, property and aliens since it assumed office. No one can assure you will be more surprised than President Perón and Foreign Minister Bramuglia that Ivanessevich should have expressed such little knowledge of this matter of the aliens and of what his Government is doing.

As I say in my secret despatch no. 2119 of March 31 and as the President has stated in his conversation with Ivanessevich, there remains only the completion of the one point of compliance - that of certain aliens - to be completed. I can assure you that the subject of these points of compliance and more latterly aliens has been

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the subject of conversations between the Foreign Minister and me two or three times a week since my arrival here and that on any number of occasions and again very recently as reported to the Department, I have discussed this matter with the President and in my last conversation with him several weeks ago, I stressed the urgency of completing the action.

I have tried to make it clear that the Argentine Government is really doing everything within its power to find these remaining aliens. It is using all the facilities of the police and of certain sectors of the Army throughout the country. It has organized special squads which act independently of the police and the Army and which are scouring the country. It is spending a great deal of money on this search which has been unremitting. The last information I had of this last list of 52 which would complete those against whom there is any evidence and of which 13 have already been deported, is that eight are under detention awaiting deportation and that deportation of these is being held up pending the results of the further search. What concerns the Argentine Government is that undoubtedly some of these people have been able to get out of the country in spite of the border controls but you will realize how inadequate these must be with the long border with Chile and Paraguay in particular. Some of these agents and probably most of them wish to avoid being returned to Germany under any circumstance and it is my opinion that without any doubt a good many of them have escaped to southern Chile and southern Brazil where they are lost among the very considerable number of Germans resident there and who would give them shelter. The photographs have been circulated widely with the most complete descriptions, but I am frankly pessimistic as to whether any of these which have escaped to other countries can be apprehended even with the collaboration of those countries.

What concerns President Perón and the Foreign Minister and other high officials of the Argentine Government is that they have for two months been making this extraordinary effort, following the efforts which they were making, and which were very real since June 1946 and they have only been able to find a certain number. I know that in Buenos Aires and in other cities and in outlying areas a considerable number of Germans and Argentines have been detained under temporary arrest as there was information that these people might have harbored these people who are being sought or may have knowledge of their whereabouts. What is giving the concern to the high Argentine authorities is that they have

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have been making this tremendous effort using all the elements at their disposal and still have not been able to get Becker and a goodly number of the others in the list. The last few times I spoke with the President about this he was really at his wit's end for he is so desirous of completing this matter, and he realizes the importance of it and is entirely understanding of the fact that we are insisting and properly so on the Government getting all of these people it can and he wants to make a full showing not only because they want to get these people because of what they have done and also because he want to clean up the situation.

I want again to say how deeply appreciative I am of the initiative which was taken by the President in connection with Ambassador Ivanessevich's return to the Argentine. I am sure that President Perón will receive the message in the spirit in which it was conveyed and that they will redouble their efforts, but what concerns me as I know it will concern them is that they have already been making all possible effort and I do not know how many of these people they can get. In my opinion in the end it will resolve itself into a question of our recognizing the good faith of the Argentine Government in this matter and of which I have said in my despatch no. 2119 there is in my opinion no doubt. If they cannot get them all or even a fair number of them I think we must recognize that their effort has been made in good faith and in the same good faith that we would show and that we might in a similar situation be exactly in the same position of not being able to deliver all of these people. I have every confidence that we will be understanding of this.

Ambassador Ivanessevich is arriving this evening. The Easter holidays are on and the President has planned some trips to several parts of the Argentine and will not be in Buenos Aires much until the 14th of April. I feel sure however, that Ivanessevich will see him before the President leaves Buenos Aires on these trips. The Foreign Minister also is absent until Monday.

I have wanted you to know how deeply I appreciate this action by the President and the Department. I feel sure that the President and the Foreign Minister will discuss this matter with me and I shall emphasize very strongly the position of our Government. This is,

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of course, what I have been doing and could not have been doing more strongly but the fact that the President and the Department have placed this matter before the Argentine Government in this manner will be very helpful, but I am frankly unable to say how the Argentine Government can take more definite measures and more ample measures to find these people than it has been taking.

When you see the President, I would appreciate very much your expressing to him my very real appreciation of his helpful and constructive initiative and action.

Believe me,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

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