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AIR MAIL

VERY CONFIDENTIAL

RESTRICTED

México, D. F., México,
November 18, 1944.

Dear Norman:

With my confidential letter of November 15 I sent you a copy of my despatch No. 21,410 of November 14 transmitting the Spanish text of a memorandum on the Argentine situation which Dr. Padilla had delivered to me and to the other Chiefs of Mission of the American Republics in Mexico City. In that letter I took occasion to make some remarks about the importance of the attitude which the British are playing in this Argentine situation, and suggested that my letter, particularly so far as it referred to this British attitude, be brought to the attention of the Acting Secretary. I also said that I thought it should be brought to the President's attention.

You may think that I went pretty far and was pretty strong with what I say concerning the British attitude, but I am convinced that I am not overestimating in any way the effect of the too uncertain British position with respect to the Argentine in strengthening the Argentine position--not only in the Argentine but in the other American Republics, or at least some of them. I have every reason to believe, and some very concrete indications, that the British Chiefs of Mission in Latin America--whether under instructions or not--are not helping our policy, but the very contrary. There is every reason to believe that the activities of some are definitely tending toward the disruption of inter-American unity.

You will recall that I said in my letter that I hoped that you would bring the substance of my letter, so far as it referred to the British attitude, to the

attention of

The Honorable
Norman Armour,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

attention of Mr. Stettinius, with the thought that Mr. Stettinius will wish to bring it to the attention of the President. In view of the fact that the President will undoubtedly soon be seeing both Churchill and Stalin, I think it is very important that he have full information with regard to this British position regarding the Argentine. There is much reason to believe that Churchill has given the President assurances of a correct British attitude with regard to the Argentine, but whatever these assurances by Churchill may have been, statements by members of the British Government and by the British press reflect an entirely different point of view, and this discrepancy is noted not only in the Argentine but in the other American Republics.

It is so obvious that in any world security system this hemisphere will have to act as a unit and that this is in the interest of world security that it is incredible that the British, who are so much interested in establishing certain spheres of influence, should not realize that it is undermining their own situation and world security to disrupt American unity. This is the point which I brought out in my letter of November 15.

There is, however, one point which I did not emphasize in my letter, and that is that it is so utterly unwise for the British to take this attitude because if they think that they can maintain this kind of a position in the Argentine and perhaps bring about the formation of regional blocs in Latin America that will help their trade position, they are so utterly wrong. Nothing could be more stupid. The fact that the present Argentine regime is placing these difficulties in the way of American firms and doing all sorts of things to American interests while British interests are being in reality unmolested, may give a certain satisfaction to Englishmen in the Argentine and to some Englishmen in London. They, however, should be the first to realize that if such a regime can consolidate itself, or if such attitudes as that of the present Argentine regime can be consolidated, the British will suffer in the end even more than we, for their interests in the Argentine from a financial and investment point of view are greater than ours. If the present Argentine regime can get away with what they are doing to us and our interests it would only be a question of time before they will do the same to the English interests, and if the

English think

English think they have any immunity from the acts of such a regime because of the present benevolent attitude they are making the worst and most stupid of mistakes.

Again I say that nothing could be more stupid than this attitude of the British, and as I said in my letter of November 15, they are repeating in connection with the present Argentine regime exactly the same errors which they made with respect to Germany and the Nazi regime. I recall that when I was in Germany it was in 1932 that the industrialists and financiers paid the debts of the Nazi party in order to put it in power, with the thought that once Hitler was in control they would be able to control him and then get rid of the Social Democrats and some of the social reforms in Germany. I told these industrialists and these financiers at the time that they were making the biggest mistake because they were cutting literally their own throats. I told them that once you put a regime like that in power it is useless to think that any reasonable elements, such as they considered themselves, could control it. These German industrialists and capitalists had the arrogance to believe that they would be able to control the Hitler regime after they had put it in.

You know what a mistake they made. President Roosevelt knows, for he knows all these things so thoroughly. We all know that the same people who put Hitler in by their acts toward the end of 1932 were the people who six months afterwards had been dispossessed of everything they had, with a very few exceptions, and in the end all of them were in the same boat. It is not necessary to particularize.

The British at that time were giving a good deal of aid and comfort to these industrialists and financiers. Later when Hitler was in and they saw what was happening to these people who had put him in they closed their eyes to the dangers that the regime had for Europe and for England and the world and tried to divert the Germans to the southwest of Europe and against the Russians--another stupidity for which we are all paying the price now.

One would think that peoples learn, but it seems that they do not, and certainly the British by their

present attitude

present attitude with respect to the present Argentine regime, no matter what lip service they may be giving to our policy, are committing the same stupidities for which we are all paying such a terrible price now. They really think that they can keep the Argentine as a spear head for their trade and to maintain their investments by taking the attitude which they are. They seem to take it for granted that we wish to keep British trade out of the Argentine, which we certainly have no thought of doing. Nothing could be more unwise than this attitude of the British, for just as soon as this government could consolidate itself they would jump on British investments in the Argentine just as they are making difficulties for us now. As this was an important phase of the matter which I failed to cover in my letter of November 15 I thought I should emphasize it in this letter, especially as I have asked that this phase of our American problem be brought to the attention of Mr. Stettinius, and of the President. I am suggesting this because the President will undoubtedly be talking with Churchill and Stalin on world security problems shortly, and we can't talk about those things without the British thoroughly understanding that in this hemisphere there must be complete American unity, and that their present attitude is helping to disrupt it. The President is so understanding of these things and has understood them so well from the beginning and has been so eternally right from the outset in the world picture so that he will realize the stupidity of the British attitude and its dangers for them and us and all of us.

The object of my letter of November 15 and this letter is to say that it is my considered opinion that it is time for the British to be more definite in what they say and do with respect to the Argentine regime, whether it has to do with purchases or contracts or attitudes, and whatever it may be. As I indicated in my letter of November 15, I think we have ample means of pressure on our British friends to come across, and I am hopeful that the President will put the screws on them.

In my opinion the time has arrived for a clear unequivocal statement by the British as to what attitude they have with respect to inter-American unity, recognizing the importance of complete collaboration between the American Republics in the world picture and in the security picture after the war, and making the clear unequivocal statement that so far as British policy is concerned it encourages the most complete

American

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American unity and discountenances any statement or any effort, and will aid in combatting any effort, to disrupt such unity from whatever source it may come. I believe the British Government should state clearly that it considers the Argentine regime as a Fascist regime, as dangerous in its practices as we have stated it to be, and that the Argentine people must have an opportunity to express their will and govern themselves along democratic lines, just as we are endeavoring to root out such Fascist regimes in other parts of the world. I think this is a point of view which the President will express to the British and to which the British will have to accede in a loyal way.

With all good wishes,

GEORGE S. MESSERSMITH

GSM/hmb