

AIR MAIL

Buenos Aires, Argentina, September 10, 1946

No. 730

Subject: With Reference to Statements made Recently by the Minister of Foreign Relations of the Argentine Concerning Enemy Property and Aliens"

CONFIDENTIAL

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to inform the Department that in La Nación of September 1, 1946 there appeared an article on the front page covering an interview which the Foreign Minister had given to Mr. Kluckhohn, the representative of the New York Times in Buenos Aires. Mr. Kluckhohn informed me afterwards that this interview was based on written questions which he had submitted to the Minister of Foreign Relations after the ratification of the Acts of Mexico City and San Francisco and that the item in La Nación was the exact text of the replies in Spanish which the Foreign Minister had made. Mr. Kluckhohn stated that he had given the text of these replies to La Nación in view of the close relations which exist between him and this paper at the same time that he forwarded a despatch to the Times giving the translation of the Foreign Minister's statements. Mr. Kluckhohn added that he had made, in transmitting these statements of the Foreign Minister to the Times, no comment except an introductory paragraph. I have before me a clipping from the New York Times of Sunday, September 1, which carries Mr. Kluckhohn's article reporting these statements of the Foreign Minister and which article must have been seen by the Department.

1/ For the purpose of the record, I send herewith a translation of the article in La Nación of September 1, 1946, enclosure 1.

I am informed that the New York Times editorially commented on the statements of the Foreign Minister as transmitted by Mr. Kluckhohn, their Buenos Aires correspondent. I have not seen this editorial, but from what I have been informed concerning it, it was not very constructive or understanding and continues to question the good faith of the Argentine Government and of the Foreign Minister. The Department must have the text of this editorial in its files.

I merely wish to comment that this type of editorial comment on developments in our relations with the Argentine is not constructive as will be apparent to the Department in view of the facts in its possession, and

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which, of course, should be known to so responsible a paper as the New York Times.

I am forwarding this despatch as undoubtedly this editorial in the New York Times created an unhappy impression here, both in the Government and among those who are not in sympathy with it. It is so obvious to those who are familiar with this situation here that the ratification of the Acts of Mexico City and San Francisco was one of the most important acts of the Argentine Government over a period of many years. The act was one which was taken in all good faith and which translates into the most definite action of the Argentine Government what is unquestionably the determination of the Argentine Government to collaborate more closely in the American picture and with us.

Further, anyone who is familiar with the situation here realizes that the Foreign Minister, Dr. Bramuglia, in spite of the fact that he has had little experience in the conduct of foreign relations, has been most constructive in his actuation since he came into that position. There is no basis for questioning his good faith or his actuation. He has always been one who favored closer collaboration with the United States and more active participation by the Argentine in the war, and this is well known here. It is obvious, therefore, that any questioning of good faith of the Argentine Government and of the Foreign Minister by so responsible a paper as the New York Times will create anything but good feeling, not only among members of the Government but also those in opposition who resent that the act of a Government and of a responsible Minister should be questioned.

That the statement which the Foreign Minister made to Mr. Kluckhohn and the editorial comment thereon by the New York Times created an unhappy situation here is shown by the fact that the Foreign Minister, Dr. Bramuglia, on the evening of September 3, took occasion to make a further statement with reference to the approval of the Acts of Mexico City and San Francisco during which he went into some detail with regard to the steps being taken by the Argentine Government in the matter of enemy property, enemy aliens, and enemy schools and institutions. Some of the statements made by the Minister in his answers to the questions put by Mr. Kluckhohn of the New York Times might have left the impression that the Argentine Government felt that it had taken all appropriate steps in connection with enemy property and aliens. This was seized upon by the editorial writer in the New York Times. It was most certainly not the intention of the Foreign Minister here in his statement to Mr. Kluckhohn to give the impression that the Argentine had taken all appropriate action with respect to enemy aliens and property. All the conversations which we have had and which I have faithfully reported have shown that the Argentine Government realizes that in the matter of enemy property and aliens there are further steps to be taken, and I have reported on the steps which are being taken.

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In order to clarify this situation, the Foreign Minister made this statement to the press on the evening of September 3, and I am transmitting herewith a translation of the article which appeared in La Prensa on the morning of September 4, enclosure 2. The same statement appeared in almost identic form in the other Buenos Aires newspapers. It will be noted that in this statement the Minister makes it abundantly clear that the Argentine Government is proceeding with these steps against enemy property and aliens and is of the opinion that the ratification of the Acts of Mexico City will strengthen the position of the Government in carrying through these steps and at least decrease some of the difficulties which it has met in the program.

Quietly and without any statements to the press, the Argentine Government is very definitely proceeding with concrete steps to liquidate this situation regarding enemy property and aliens. These are the last two steps which, I am sure in the opinion of the Department as well as in the opinion of this Embassy, remain to be taken by the Argentine to have complied adequately with its inter-American commitments. In the field of enemy schools and institutions the Argentine Government has already complied more fully than most of the other American Republics, and in respect to such schools and institutions this Embassy and the British Embassy are in complete accord that the steps which have been taken by the Argentine Government are thoroughgoing and adequate.

The Minister of Foreign Relations requested me to call at the Ministry on September 7, and he informed me that the Junta de Vigilancia and the Central Bank were working together to proceed with the nationalization, argentinization, and liquidation of enemy firms, and he gave me some details as to progress which seemed satisfactory and which were most encouraging. He said that some of these firms were important and that the plans for their disposition had to be carefully made and that these were being made particularly by the officials of the Central Bank who were now in the picture and who were more competent in matters of this kind than the members of the Junta de Vigilancia. With respect to enemy aliens, the Minister outlined to me the steps which the Government is taking, and there is reason to believe that in the near future there will be public announcements of action taken which will show the good faith and definite intentions of the Argentine Government.

I should like to observe in this connection that the Foreign Minister is bearing the principal responsibility, under the direction of the President from whom he has the most specific instructions, of carrying through this action with regard to enemy property and aliens. The Foreign Minister has been most active, but he has been surcharged by numerous activities; he has been using every effort during the last weeks to prevent a breakdown in the negotiations in progress between the British and the Argentine Governments on the matter of sterling balances,

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meat prices, and the British railways. The Minister is fully aware of the importance of these negotiations and every informed person in Buenos Aires, including the British Ambassador and the British Mission, realize the extraordinary effort which the Foreign Minister has made and the good will and understanding which he has shown. It seems apparent this morning that in spite of these efforts, the negotiations will break down, but I happen to know that during the past three weeks because of the immediate and primary importance of this matter, the Minister has been obliged to devote a good part of his time to this. In addition to this, he has been under the necessity of spending a good deal of time in Congress before both Houses in connection with the ratification of the Acts of Mexico City and San Francisco, relations with Russia, etc. There is no doubt that these occupations have made it impossible for the Minister to press some of the matters affecting enemy aliens and property as he would otherwise have done, but I know it remains a primary preoccupation of the President and the Foreign Minister.

As an indication of the action which is going on quietly, the Minister of Justice and Public Instruction took the initiative the other evening in setting forth to me at considerable length the steps which are being taken. There is one matter which must go before the Supreme Court before the Argentine Government will be able to carry through its full program regarding enemy aliens and there are important matters pending in the Congress with respect to the Supreme Court and other courts. It is probable that a considerable number of changes will be made in the personnel of the courts, and it is known that the courts have not been helpful on the whole in their decisions with respect to enemy property and aliens.

This despatch is being written for the record and in order to bring into proper perspective the statements of the Foreign Minister hereto attached as enclosures 1 and 2.

It will, I believe, within the course of several weeks, be possible to report to the Department definite steps of a most encouraging character which the Argentine Government is taking with reference to enemy property and aliens.

Respectfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

Enclosures:

1. Translation of article,  
La Nación, September 1
2. Translation of article,  
La Prensa, September 4

To Department in quadruplicate  
File No. 851/800/820.02  
GeorgeSMessersmith:fmk

