

SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA.

[January 22.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 2.

[A 403/403/2]

No. 1.

Sir C. Mallet to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston.—(Received January 22, 1923.)

(No. 272. Very Confidential.)

My Lord,

Montevideo, December 22, 1922.

IN the course of private conversations with the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the eve of my departure from Buenos Aires, Dr. Le Bretón stated that Mr. Riddle, the United States Ambassador, went to the Foreign Office to present Mr. Willing Spencer, the new Counsellor, and said: "Willing, you will have much pleasure in knowing Dr. Le Bretón because he is a great friend of America." Whereupon Dr. Le Bretón answered: "Yes, Mr. Riddle, but I do not always understand you; for instance, I do not understand what you mean by sending your naval officers to Brazil to train the Brazilian navy, and, at the same time, you are talking of disarming and reducing your navy." "Oh," said Mr. Riddle, "the reason is that the Brazilian navy is untrained, so we have offered to train it, because if we don't Great Britain will do it, and our policy is to keep out of the Continent of America all European influence, and we have not made a similar offer to Argentina as the Argentine navy is already well trained." To this Dr. Le Bretón observed that in order to train a navy equipment is needed in the shape of cannons, submarines, &c., and that if Brazil was to be supplied with all these things, so that she should learn to use them, the Argentine would be forced to supply her navy in the same proportion, which would give rise to a large expenditure the country can ill afford at present.

Dr. Le Bretón then asked Mr. Riddle to find a more comprehensible explanation, and informed him that he has telegraphed to the Argentine Ambassador at Washington to let Mr. Hughes and others know that the Argentine Government is perplexed and does not understand the action of the United States Government in this matter; and, as a parting shot, he said to Mr. Riddle that if the United States undertake to train the Brazilian navy, Argentina will be obliged to bring instructors for her navy from England or from Japan, and as the latter are not to be trusted England would have to be asked to render this service.

Mr. Riddle showed his displeasure and left in a huff, and on that account Dr. Le Bretón purposely omitted the American Ambassador's name from the list of those he invited to a farewell banquet given to me on my departure for Montevideo.

I have forwarded a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.

I have, &c.

C. MALLET.

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