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L'ambassadeur en Argentine
au sous-secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures
Ambassador in Argentina
to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs

LETTER NO. 128

Buenos Aires, March 13, 1961

CONFIDENTIAL

ARGENTINA AND THE UNITED STATES-CUBAN PROBLEM

As our despatch No. 123 of March 7[†] stated, the facts surrounding the efforts of the Argentine government to mediate the United States Cuban conflict² are hard to obtain. Few officials in the Ministry have been involved in the exercise. The Foreign Minister took the matter into his own hands and what transpired has been a surprise not only to the general public but also to all the senior members of the Foreign Office. This is not the first time the Minister has acted in this way; you will remember that none of the senior officers in his department was made aware of the answer which the Minister made to Mr. Green's invitation for President Frondizi to visit Canada. Despite the secrecy which cloaked the Minister's actions, it seems fairly clear now why the action was taken, and also why it was kept so quiet.

2. President Frondizi undoubtedly conceived the idea. The United States-Cuban conflict confronts him with a serious dilemma. He needs United States support for his economic recovery programme hence cannot side with Cuba in that country's quarrel with the United States. At the same time, support for the United States would alienate a large segment of his own party, and would be bitterly opposed by a goodly proportion of Argentine citizens, of all parties. The only way out of this dilemma for Frondizi is for the United States-Cuban quarrel to be solved. Frondizi's initiative, therefore, may be considered as a genuine effort to make a contribution to this problem. Doubtless there were other considerations as well. Frondizi would not wish to appear less of a spokesman than Quadros for the under-privileged peoples of Latin America. Nevertheless, his overriding consideration was to try to find a solution to the issues dividing Cuba and the United States.

3. Why the secrecy? Frondizi properly assumed that any Argentine initiative at this time would be resisted by the armed forces; not only because they oppose any concessions to Castro on ideological grounds, but also because they feel it undignified for Argentina to take such action in the face of the insulting and unfriendly behaviour of the Cuban government toward the people and government of Argentina since Castro came to power. It is reported that the military chiefs are preparing a memorandum to the President stating their opposition to the government's action in this matter. It is possible that the decision of the President to bypass the "military cabinet" on an issue in which they feel themselves so legitimately to be concerned may lead to another military-political crisis, which would be a great misfortune.

4. The President could also expect opposition to his plans from other sectors, and doubtless sought to forestall it, or at least to carry out his ideas without first being advised against his projected course. Press comment has generally been hostile, largely on the ground that any such initiative was doomed to fail and would contribute nothing to an eventual solution. *La Nación* in its issue of March 10 described the action as "spectacular, hasty, and risky." It said, "Even if mediation by Argentina succeeded in eliminating the tension between Cuba and the

² Voir/See "Argentina Offers to Mediate," *New York Times*, March 5, 1961, p. 20; "U.S. Will Reject Cuba Mediation," *ibid.*, March 7, 1961, p. 13.