

115. Telegram From Secretary of State Muskie's Delegation to the Department of State and the Embassy in Argentina¹

New York, October 1, 1980, 1756Z

Secto 8046. Subject: (U) Secretary's Bilateral with Argentine FM Pastor September 30.

1. (Confidential-Entire text).

2. Summary. Pastor speaking first summarized recent Argentine history and aims of current GOA, was highly critical of OAS report on human rights and efforts to make Argentina a public target, defended GOA recognition of the Garcia Meza Regime in Bolivia while claiming GOA has and will counsel moderation, and depicted US/Argentine bilateral relations as mainly a one way street with his country on the losing end. Nevertheless Argentina is a firm ally and hopes, with improving relations, it will be treated as such. He mentioned a possible visit of the Argentine President-elect to Washington, and invited the Secretary to Buenos Aires. It was a tough performance with no obvious departures from script. The Secretary, while also voicing strong interest in improving relations, emphasized that there are two serious problems—Bolivia and Human Rights. In addition he stressed the importance the USG attaches to continued Argentine restraint on

¹ Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D800470-0449. Confidential; Immediate; Exdis. Sent for information to Asunción, Brasília, the U.S. Mission to Geneva, La Paz, Montevideo, and Santiago. Muskie was in New York for the U.N. General Assembly.

grains shipments to the USSR, and expressed hope the GOA will soon ratify Tlatelolco. End summary

3. Bilateral meeting between Secretary and GOA FM Pastor lasted 45 minutes. On U.S. side were Secretary Newsom, AS Bowdler, Country Director Service, and interpreter. In addition to Pastor were Aja Espil, and FM Official Jorge Stock. After pleasantries, Pastor delivered lengthy summary of recent Argentine history, emphasizing the Soviet-inspired Marxist subversion in the period 1973–1976 and the chaotic political and economic situation that prevailed when the military took power in 1976. The Argentine military takeover was not in the classic Latin American mold; rather it was demanded by “all the Argentine people.” The Argentine military set four goals for themselves: establish peace and security; reorganize national administration and make it more efficient; reverse the economic decline; restore democracy. According to Pastor, there has been good progress on the first three of these objectives, and the GOA remains firmly committed to the fourth. In the latter regard, Pastor noted that the military government has been meeting with more than 50 interest groups to discuss how Argentina’s constitution should be changed to ensure “solid and stable democracy” in the future. Pastor concluded this part of his exposition with the argument that Argentina’s military rulers are not like Pinochet in Chile (with his lengthy transition plans) or the government in Paraguay.

4. Pastor then addressed the IAHRC report on human rights in Argentina. He said that the commission had arrived with preconceived ideas, that they spent only 15 days in the country, and that they were not even concerned with taking back the documents provided by the GOA. In Pastor’s view, the primary purposes of the OAS are security and cooperation. He recounted a long history of Argentine cooperation with the United States and other hemispheric nations in these regards. The GOA does not believe the OAS should be a forum for accusations against one or another member. All countries have their problems. We must not let those problems interfere and impede pursuit of the primary objectives. It is neither fair nor just that Argentina should be the target on human rights issues in the OAS. According to Pastor, some Argentines are beginning to ask if it would not be better for Argentina simply to withdraw.

5. On Bolivia, Pastor began by saying that Argentina had been blamed for a military coup in 1962, that Brazil and the U.S. were the supposed villains in 1964, that the U.S. was given credit for the downfall of Torres while Brazil was mentioned when Banzer stepped down, and now it is Argentina’s turn again to get the blame. The GOA has a long history of providing military and economic assistance to Bolivia. Pastor ventured he thought that if other countries had provided more assistance along the way, the Bolivian people would not be in their present

circumstances. Pastor argued that rather than encouraging the Bolivian military, the GOA had in the past counselled restraint (to Banzer earlier this year). When Garcia Meza took power, the GOA waited 14 days before according recognition—an unusually long time for neighbors in that part of the world. More recently in another conversation with Banzer, the GOA has argued strongly for responsibility and prudence on the part of the new Bolivian Government and that it should quickly set forth a serious program. Pastor said that if some Argentine officers have made statements praising the new regime, they are speaking outside the bounds of official policy.

6. Turning to bilateral relations, Pastor asked Jorge Stock to read from a list of all the ways in which the GOA has cooperated with the U.S. in the past year or so (Non-Aligned Movement, refugees, Afghanistan, Middle East problems, hostages in Iran, etc.), and on the other hand, negative U.S. actions involving Argentina (the UN working group on missing persons, votes in the IFI's, nuclear matters, the Malvinas and Beagle, failure to help correct the trade imbalance, etc.).

7. Pastor concluded his presentation with the affirmation that Argentina is a western country and that it recognizes the fundamental importance of U.S. leadership. Argentina is an ally and friend of the U.S., and wants to be treated as such. In this regard, after the U.S. election, Pastor suggested the desirability of a "memorandum of understanding" between the two countries, setting the framework for political, military, and economic cooperation across the board. He also mentioned the desire of the next President-elect of Argentina (unnamed) to meet with President Carter toward the end of the year, and Pastor invited Secretary Muskie to visit Argentina early next year.

8. Secretary Muskie thanked Pastor for his review of relations. He affirmed the US interest in improving relations and referred to the Presidential decision in this regard taken last spring.² While we appreciate the improvements that have taken place and want to see this continue, there are two serious problems from the U.S. perspective. With respect to Bolivia, the U.S. believed that the GOA had something to do with the recent change in government.³ We do not consider the Garcia Meza regime representative, and we dislike the "harsh and bloody" measures which have been employed. Argentine support for the regime is a setback to our bilateral relations; it is a problem which needs to be worked out. While it is not the U.S. desire to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries, regimes such as the one now in

² See Document 110.

³ See Document 113 and 157.

power in Bolivia generate very negative feelings among the American people.

9. Turning to the Human Rights situation in Argentina, the Secretary noted recent improvements but also that there continue to be some 2,000 political prisoners, that there have been 11 disappearances this year, and that there is no independent judiciary. To emphasize the importance the U.S. attaches to Human Rights, the Secretary recalled that when he first came to the Senate the U.S. and Argentina had good bilateral relations. There had followed a long period of difficulties, caused in part by internal Argentine problems. The Secretary expressed hope that we may now be entering a new era of improving relations.

10. The Secretary noted that Ambassador Bowdler would be discussing other issues in more detail with Pastor,⁴ but that he wanted to mention them also. Regarding the issue of nuclear cooperation, the Secretary wondered if the GOA was considering ratifying Tlatelolco; it would be a useful step. On the grains embargo to the Soviet Union, the Secretary noted that Argentine shipments this year will exceed by 8 to 10 percent the targets agreed last January. He emphasized that the reduced grain imports of the Soviet Union have forced a cutback in meat consumption and that, as we have seen recently, this is always a sensitive matter in a communist country. He pointed out the current Iran/Iraq war as further evidence of the importance to the west in keeping pressure on the Soviet Union. It is essential that the Soviets not be allowed or encouraged to expand their influence into other areas of the Middle East. If, for example, they were to gain control of the Strait of Hormuz, there would be serious danger of World War III. GOA support on grains is critical to this effort. We are asking other allies to also maintain restrictions in many areas—e.g., the NATO allies to continue high-technology sanctions.

11. In closing his remarks, the Secretary mentioned a current effort within the Non-Aligned Movement to exclude Egypt. Pastor replied immediately that he had already talked with the Egyptians and promised full GOA support.

12. With time running out, Pastor commented quickly on some of the points the Secretary had made. On Bolivia, the GOA can not abandon it because it might fall apart, but it will undertake a conscientious and serious effort to steer the new regime in a more acceptable direction. Pastor denied that there are any political prisoners in Argentina; rather there are 1200 terrorists that are being dealt with by the judiciary whose

⁴ In telegram 263737 to Buenos Aires, October 3, the Department summarized Bowdler's meeting with Pastor, during which they discussed Bolivia, human rights, and the OAS General Assembly. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D800472–0234) (C)

power is absolute. Regarding possible disappearances this year, the GOA has about become convinced that persons are being paid to disappear, and he claimed as proof that some have later surfaced. On grains, Pastor said GOA is restricting sales as much as possible but it is difficult and, furthermore, Argentina has an unfavorable trade balance which makes all grain sales important. Pastor affirmed that Argentina is going to ratify Tlatelolco. On this point, he argued that the GOA would have done so before if it had not been for U.S. lack of cooperation on nuclear matters. He noted that the recent decision to sell uranium to India was very difficult for the Argentines to understand.⁵ This line of reasoning prompted a final Pastor comment about recent apparent U.S. approbation for the military takeover in Turkey⁶—again in contrast to our relations with his own military regime.

13. The bilateral concluded with mutual expressions of desire for improved relations.

Muskie

⁵ Additional documentation is scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations, 1977–1980*, vol. XIX, South Asia.

⁶ See *Foreign Relations, 1977–1980*, vol. XXI, Cyprus; Turkey; Greece, Document 154.
