

"Bad Neighbor": US-Argentine Relations in the 1940s

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	Page 1
Chapter 1.....	Page 9
<i>Argentina as Problem Country: Early Doubts</i>	
Chapter 2.....	Page 11
<i>Argentina Falling Behind: Images of Bodies and Journeys</i>	
Chapter 3.....	Page 14
<i>Argentina in Roosevelt's Discourse: Threats to the Hemispheric Body</i>	
Chapter 4.....	Page 18
<i>Nazis in Argentina and the US Response</i>	
Chapter 5.....	Page 21
<i>The Question of Unity</i>	
Chapter 6.....	Page 23
<i>Argentina to Braden: Fascist and Communist</i>	
Chapter 7.....	Page 30
<i>The "Argentine Condition," the Press, and the Body Metaphor</i>	
Chapter 8.....	Page 37
<i>The Fifth Column in Argentina</i>	
Conclusion.....	Page 39
<i>The Legacy of Anti-Perón Rhetoric</i>	
Bibliography.....	Page 42

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My interest in this topic arose while I was taking a class on Argentine Social History at the University of Buenos Aires in the fall of 2009. Every Wednesday from six to ten at night I listened to the brilliant Mercedes Depino who, while chain smoking and drinking mate, told the story of her country in vivid terms. Professor Depino's description of Peronism—as the best and the worst of Argentine politics—made me curious about how the US viewed Peron's Argentina and why—a process that led me to write this thesis. I'm grateful to Professor Depino and to the tireless Simon Taylor, whose work as my TA for Historical Theories and Methods helped me turn my ideas into a coherent prospectus when I returned to Columbia. The staff of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Butler Library guided me and made the Braden papers available to me. Thank you to Professor Howell for two semesters of careful, tough, and kind advising and editing. I also want to thank my second reader, Professor Stephanson, who was generous enough to read a full draft of this thesis and edit it meticulously and thoughtfully. Finally, thank you to my family and friends for being so encouraging and supportive.

“Bad Neighbor”: US-Argentine Relations in the 1940s

As US forces were sorting through Nazi-era archives in Berlin in 1946, they received a cable from the Undersecretary of State for Latin American Affairs, Spruille Braden.

Braden had an unusual request: immediate priority was to be given to unearthing documents that proved collaboration between the Nazis and the military government of Argentina. The documents, Braden instructed, were to be compiled into a “Blue Book” and had to be ready before Argentina’s presidential elections in February of 1946, in time to embarrass Juan Perón, the heavily favored presidential candidate and Braden’s personal and diplomatic rival.¹ The year after this request, Spruille Braden’s diplomatic career had ended and with it, some say, the country’s non-interventionist “Good Neighbor” policy for Latin America—a nonbinding pledge first articulated by Franklin Roosevelt that the US would refrain from intervention in the domestic affairs of the Latin American countries.²

Yet as early as 1942 the broad interpretation of what constituted “intervention” and “interference” in the context of the Good Neighbor policy was wavering. The question of whether to tolerate Latin American governments who maintained ties with the Axis Powers had exposed its limitations, raising questions about Washington’s commitment to the sovereignty of Latin American nations. Argentina’s government, the principal dissenter on the matter of a unified anti-Axis foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere, soon learned the consequences of failing to meet Washington’s expectations for the countries it considered its ‘back yard.’

¹ Frank, Gary. *Juan Perón vs. Spruille Braden: The Story Behind the Blue Book*. (Maryland: University Press of America, 1980), 100

² Kesler, John C. “Spruille Braden as a Good Neighbor: The Latin American Policy of the United States, 1933-1947” (PhD diss., Kent State University, 1985), v.

From June 1942 to June 1943, Argentina's president was Ramón Castillo, one of several conservative politicians to lead Argentina during the period known as the "Infamous Decade" from 1930 to 1943, when electoral fraud and corruption pervaded Argentine politics. The Revolution of 1943, a military coup led by General Arturo Rawson and a group of military officers known as the GOU (United Officers' Group), initiated a period of military government during which Colonel Juan Perón gained influence, first as an assistant to the Secretary of War, then as the head of the Labor Department, and later as Vice President.³ US policymakers agonized over whether to recognize Argentina's military government, over how much to pressure Argentina about fascist elements there, and over whether to consider Perón friend or foe.

This thesis will analyze the terms of the debate in the US concerning Axis influence in Argentina, beginning with the Inter-American Conference at Rio de Janeiro in January 1942, where Argentina's government first made known that it did not intend to follow other Latin American nations in breaking diplomatic relations with the Axis. The Rio conference aimed to secure a break of all diplomatic relations between American nations and the Axis powers. All but two countries at the conference—Argentina and Chile—signed a pact agreeing to the motion.⁴ Though it should not have come as a great surprise given Argentina's neutral stance in World War I and its previous history of neutrality,⁵ this act of defiance triggered anti-Argentine sentiments in Washington that intensified following the military coup of 1943, and would reach unprecedented levels with the rise to power of Juan

³ Brown, Jonathan C. *A Brief History of Argentina*, 2nd ed. (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 192-193.

⁴ Frank, Gary. *Juan Perón vs. Spruille Braden: The Story Behind the Blue Book*. (Maryland: University Press of America, 1980), 3.

⁵ For more on this see Lewis, Daniel K. *The History of Argentina*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 10.

Perón in 1945. Although the scope of the paper will end with Spruille Braden's exit from diplomacy in 1947, some consideration will be given to the legacy of the US-Argentine schism, evinced in such incidents as the 1948 Economic Cooperation Administration decision to prohibit European countries from using Marshall Plan funds to buy Argentine exports.⁶

The attitudes of US diplomats, journalists, and policymakers toward Argentina in the 1940s are a test case for the principle of noninterference in the Good Neighbor Policy. For the purposes of this thesis it will be useful to borrow the distinction Bryce Wood makes in discussing the Good Neighbor Policy between "nonintervention" and "noninterference" With the Good Neighbor Policy, the US pledged nonintervention—that is, "that it would not employ its armed forces in support of its objectives in Latin American, particularly Caribbean, countries. Adoption of this policy did not mean, of course that the United States gave up all means of influencing Latin American governments in all spheres of policy."⁷ This commitment to nonintervention by military means can be called the letter of the Good Neighbor Policy. Yet inherent in the policy was a spirit as well, which Wood terms noninterference: "The policy of noninterference renounced any and all techniques of influence for the pursuit of certain former policy objectives. These latter objectives were the spread of democratic institutions in Latin America and the avoidance of situations usually described as instability, chaos, or anarchy."⁸ Despite the commitment to noninterference attached to the Good Neighbor Policy, the US viewed Argentina, a distant

⁶ Sheinin, David M. K. *Argentina and the United States: An Alliance Contained*. (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 97.

⁷ Wood, Bryce. *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 136.

⁸ Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*, 137.

neutral nation, as a significant threat to US interests in the Western Hemisphere, and US observers and policymakers objected vociferously to Argentina's stance. True to the promise of nonintervention in the Good Neighbor Policy, US policymakers made no effort to coerce Argentina using military force, but we shall see that Washington's response to Argentina's neutral stance strained the bounds of noninterference.

In deciding how to react to Argentine recalcitrance concerning the Axis Powers, US policymakers balanced the constraints of the Good Neighbor Policy with a desire for Inter-American unity on Washington's ideological terms. This thesis studies the terms of the debate over the US role in Argentina and Latin America during Spruille Braden's tenure as US Ambassador to Argentina, the position he held before being appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs. Braden was a Montanan who had worked for a time as an engineer in his family's copper mines in Chile and spoke fluent Spanish. He earned acclaim for his role as a mediator in the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay, and served as ambassador to Colombia (1939-1942) and to Cuba (1942-1945).⁹ At the time Braden held the Argentina ambassadorship, the post was considered to be among the most important and difficult diplomatic postings because US-Argentine relations had become fraught since Argentina's 1942 refusal to sever relations with the Axis.

The principle of noninterference associated with the Good Neighbor Policy effectively collapsed during the second world war and its immediate aftermath under the dangers—some more imagined than real—posed by Argentine refusal to break with the Axis powers, the election of the populist Perón as president, and the postwar specter of

⁹ Trask, Roger R. "Spruille Braden versus George Messersmith: World War II, the Cold War, and Argentine Policy, 1945-1947." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Feb., 1984): 74.

communism in Latin America. Although these events are the proximate causes of the collapse and although they have been well studied, a close look at some of the sources produced during that period or created as memoirs in years following reveals fundamental contradictions within the policy itself. More problematically still, they reveal contradictions in US discourses about the nature of the community of American nations, which not only confirm that the official policy was unsustainable but also suggest that it could have never served to unite Americans.

Sources

My sources will range from the personal reflections of Spruille Braden, to journalistic accounts of the diplomatic tensions in the mid-1940s, and to official Roosevelt administration documents such as FBI accounts of the military-political threat in Argentina in 1942 and 1943. By closely examining the language in my sources I will argue that US policymakers and observers considered the Argentine government dangerous precisely because it was not sufficiently deferential to US interests. The Argentine danger was alternately and somewhat contradictorily labeled fascist and, after World War II, increasingly as communist, a clear sign that US officials could not pinpoint what it was that made Argentina a “problem country,” other than its refusal to conform to US expectations. The exact nature of the Argentine government was difficult for those in the US to ascertain. No matter the specific charge, however, each of these source categories used one of two common metaphors: foreign influences in Argentina, whether fascist or communist, were a disease afflicting the body of the Western Hemisphere, or Argentina was lagging behind the other nations of the Western Hemisphere in linear terms. The issue at stake, it is clear, was

not fascism or communism per se, but US control in Latin America and protection of the hemisphere from outside influence, whatever its political character.

Historiography

The story of US-Argentine tensions in the 1940s and of Braden's role in it is by now well known. The outsized personalities of both Braden and Perón catapulted this feud to relative fame in diplomatic and inter-American history. My aim, therefore, is not to re-tread this territory by describing the breakdown in US-Argentine relations. Rather, I am examining the sources to see how historical actors constructed the narrative of the conflict in personal, periodical, and official writings. Using different kinds of sources will allow me to show the commonalities among historical actors, ranging from Braden on the ground in Argentina to members of the US press and to President Roosevelt's top advisors. Such commonalities demonstrate that the Braden-Perón feud, beyond being a personal rivalry or the result of competing ideologies in the State Department, shows habits of language and thought common to US policymakers and analysts at the time.

My findings therefore conflict with the dominant interpretation of the Good Neighbor Policy, proposed by Bryce Wood in the masterful study, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*. Wood's interpretation is that the Good Neighbor Policy "found its origin in practice and improvisation, rather than in principle" and that the evolution of Washington's expectation of reciprocity (if the US does certain things Latin America wants, Latin America will return the favor) was a process of "trial and error."¹⁰ Randall Bennett Woods in *The Roosevelt Foreign-Policy Establishment and the "Good Neighbor": The United States and Argentina, 1941-1945* also stresses the improvisatory nature of the Good Neighbor Policy,

¹⁰ Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*, 137, 7.

which he attributes to the conflict between dueling camps in the State Department—the internationalists led by Sumner Welles who opposed intervention and the hard-liners led by Cordell Hull who condoned it.¹¹ Bennett Woods argues that these two groups clashed over Latin America policy, but that ultimately the internationalists prevailed. His work puts Braden on the Hull side of the debate. David Sheinin in *Argentina and the United States: An Alliance Contained*¹² and Fredrick Pike in *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos*¹³ also cite competing groups in the State Department and the ensuing chaos in the department as the strata out of which rose the Good Neighbor Policy. Because these authors focus on the institutional history of how the Good Neighbor Policy was formed and enacted, they miss attitudinal similarities among actors whom they view as opposing one another. I argue that patterns of language and thought regarding Argentina and Latin America are common to those whom Bennett Woods and others place in rival categories, and so the Good Neighbor Policy must be seen as reflecting inherent tensions in policymakers' thought, rather than the result of a clear victory by one group or the result of chaos and improvisation.

Methodology

To systematize my close reading of the sources I will read for metaphor, employing the linguistic methodology found in what is known as Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Elena

¹¹ Bennett Woods, Randall: *The Roosevelt Foreign-Policy Establishment and the 'Good Neighbors': The United States and Argentina, 1941–1945* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), xi, 23.

¹² Sheinin, David M. K. *Argentina and the United States: An Alliance Contained*. (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2006) 84–86.

¹³ Pike, Fredrick B. *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995) xxv.

Semino's 2008 work *Metaphor in Discourse*, which explains recent advances in the field, provides a clear explanation of "Cognitive" or "Conceptual" Metaphor Theory.¹⁴ This field, whose most famous exponent is Berkeley linguist George Lakoff, studies the interaction of "target domains"—corresponding to relatively abstractive, subjective concepts such as time, emotion, life, or death—and source domains, which by contrast correspond to "concrete, simple, familiar, physical and well-delineated experiences, such as motion, bodily phenomena, physical objects and so on."¹⁵ Semino gives the example of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, in which the target domain (life) is relatively more complex than the source domain (journey), which has its roots in the simple physical experience of moving along a path from one place to another. Reading my sources through this lens and with the aid of this theory, looking at how ideas are expressed in addition to the ideas themselves, allows me to see patterns of language that suggest patterns of thought. For example, Sumner Welles employed the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor to describe Argentina as falling behind the other nations of the Western Hemisphere, as we shall see. Mervyn James used the same metaphor-based approach to sources in his historical article, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," in which he argues that "it was the idea of the social order as body which had the widest connotation, and which was the most obsessive and fruitful," as evinced the in the rituals surrounding Corpus Christi Day that James studied.¹⁶ The methodology also finds uses outside of academia, as in Susan Sontag's "Illness as Metaphor" essay, about how the metaphors used to describe cancer shape patients' feelings about their illness and their identity.

¹⁴ Semino, Elena. *Metaphor in Discourse*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

¹⁵ Semino, *Metaphor in Discourse*, 6.

¹⁶ James, Mervyn, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," *Past and Present*, No. 98 (Feb., 1983): 6.

Applying this methodology shows two key issues: First, language in each kind of source points to US condescension toward Argentina and a belief, as in the Monroe Doctrine, that the Western Hemisphere was a single body under the guidance if not the control of the United States—a body which foreign influences could infect as would a disease. Second, the Good Neighbor Policy sparked a debate about what kind of unity the US should pursue among the countries of the Hemisphere. Should it be, as Braden advocated, an ideological unity based on democracy and liberal values? Or, should it be a practical unity in which concerns such as fighting Communism could trump US aversion to dictatorial governments?

1. Argentina as Problem Country: Early Doubts

The documents from the “Argentine Papers” now housed in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library filtered up to the Oval Office from the Justice Department and other agencies. Some relay intelligence and some provide policy recommendations. Many are FBI memoranda explaining political events in Argentina submitted by J. Edgar Hoover to the State Department and to Roosevelt’s aid, Harry Hopkins, who then passed them on to Roosevelt’s secretary. The claims in the FBI documents tend to conflate Argentina’s indifference to or collaboration with the Nazis with efforts to create a bloc of countries opposed to the United States. This jump is made on page 2 of the June 1943 FBI report “Totalitarian Activities in Argentina Today” in a single sentence:

“This document reveals how the Argentine Government and important personages in it, including Vice president Juan D. Perón, collaborated with German agents in Argentina in an endeavor to establish revolutionary movements in other Latin

American countries which could establish military regimes favorable to Argentina and thus enable the formation of a block of countries opposed to the United States.”¹⁷

Here, the allegation is not of ideological sympathy with the Axis so much as it is of using the Axis to gain tools to foment revolution in other Latin American countries, and to then turn those countries against the U.S. While Ambassador Braden tended to frame the question of Argentine intransigence in ideological terms, as when he called Perón as committed a Nazi as Hitler,¹⁸ the FBI documents cite more practical concerns, such as whether Perón and his cronies could be paid to renounce the Axis, or whether Argentina’s flirtation with fascism were a front to create a sphere of influence opposed to that of the U.S.

Chapter X of the FBI report, “Argentina and the War,” claims, “From the standpoint of the present World War, the strategic importance of Argentina arises from its geographic position and the resultant diversion of maritime traffic between the Atlantic and Pacific around Cape Horn should the Panama Canal become impassable to maritime traffic.”¹⁹ However, the report concedes that, “Argentina assumes its greatest importance in the Allied war effort because of her productive capacity.”²⁰ The threat from Argentina in terms of military strategy may have been indirect, but the volume of documents and correspondence on the subject of whether to recognize Argentina’s military government and how to get the government to break with the Axis shows that Washington saw what

¹⁷ “Totalitarian Activities in Argentina Today.” Federal Bureau of Investigation. June, 1943. The Argentine Papers of the Franklin Roosevelt Library. Vol. 2. 86-87.

¹⁸ Braden, Spruille. Letter to Ellis Briggs. July 28, 1945. The Papers of Spruille Braden, Box 18. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

¹⁹ “Totalitarian Activities in Argentina Today.” Federal Bureau of Investigation. June, 1943. The Argentine Papers of the Franklin Roosevelt Library. Vol. 2. 86-87.

²⁰ Ibid, 90.

Braden called the “Argentine condition”²¹ as more than just a possible vulnerability in Allied military strategy. The very use of the phrase “Argentine condition,” the metaphor of a disease infecting a body, shows that despite Argentina’s limited importance in military terms, the country garnered attention in Washington because policymakers thought it was politically diseased in a way that endangered the US vision for the Western Hemisphere.

2. Argentina Falling Behind: Images of Bodies and Journeys

US policymakers wanted any recognition or non-recognition of the Argentine military government that came to power in the coup of 1943 to be announced simultaneously by the U.S. and the other American republics. By June 6, 1943, Brazilian, Chilean, and Paraguayan ambassadors to Argentina were prepared to recognize the government. Braden’s predecessor as US Ambassador to Argentina, Norman Armour, wrote to the Secretary of State requesting guidance: “If the Department feels that uniform action by all Republics is important and we are not prepared to grant prompt recognition, Department may wish so to advise other Governments, particularly Brazil, Chile and Paraguay.”²² Secretary Hull replied to Armour the same day, advising that all Western Hemisphere nations should wait to recognize the Argentine government and should do so simultaneously, if at all.²³

Later in the same month, Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles wrote a telling letter to Ambassador Armour in order “to review the objectives of our policy with respect

²¹ Braden, Spruille. Letter to Ellis Briggs. July 28, 1945. The Papers of Spruille Braden, Box 18. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

²² Armour, Norman. Telegram from Ambassador Armour to Secretary of State. June 6, 1943. FRUS, 1943. American Republics, Vol. V. Pp. 369-370.

²³ Hull, Cordell. Telegram from Secretary of State to Ambassador in Argentina. June 6, 1943. FRUS 1943. American Republics, Vol. V. P. 370.

to that country [Argentina].”²⁴ In this letter, Welles contrasts what he deems the United States’ faithful, strict adherence to the Good Neighbor Policy with Argentine obstinacy.

Welles writes,

“Over a decade ago the President announced his policy of the Good Neighbor. Our strict adherence to this policy, demonstrated time after time, convinced the people of the other American republics of the sincerity of our intentions.”

Welles then invokes metaphorical language to describe the Western Hemisphere as a unit over which the shadow of Fascism has been cast:

“As the rise of the Axis forces cast its long shadow over this hemisphere the American Republics almost instinctively drew together for the safeguarding of their mutual interests, namely, their freedom and independence and right to live their lives peacefully within a world governed by law.”

The metaphor implied here is that the Western Hemisphere is a single body and, as we shall see in other documents from the period, the US is positioned as its head. Another commonly used metaphor appears as well, in the same telegram: the journey. In this image, members of the hemisphere are embarked on a common journey of war with the Axis—but Argentina is not keeping up.

“The policy of the Argentine Government in its attitude towards the world crisis was lagging behind that held generally by the other American governments. [...] Whereas the other countries agreed upon measures of cooperation and put them into effect, Argentina hung back. [...] [We tried to] enable Argentina to keep in step with the other American republics.”²⁵

Note the use of the phrases “lagging behind,” “hung back,” and “keep in step.” Although other scholars have argued that Sumner Welles tended to interpret the Good Neighbor

²⁴ Welles, Sumner. Telegram from the Under Secretary of State to Ambassador in Argentina.” June 28, 1943. FRUS, 1943. American Republics, Vol. V. Pp. 419-420.

²⁵ Ibid, 420.

Policy as a compact that guaranteed each nation a sovereign voice, we see that he too fell into the patterns of thought that cast Argentina as a subordinate of the US and “America” as a unitary space.

Welles goes on to advise a wait-and-see approach to Argentina’s military government, and speculates that the coup was orchestrated to secure more military funding. He cautions against resuming friendly relations with Argentina’s government as long as the government maintained Argentina’s neutrality, writing, “Inter-American solidarity would receive a severe jolt were Argentina at this late date to be welcomed into the fold like a the prodigal son.”²⁶ Finally, he returns to the path metaphor to say that if Argentina were to join the US and its allies, “such action would open to her a useful and constructive path of cooperation with the other American republics in the future”²⁷ as well as securing for Argentina a role in the United Nations and the post-war decision-making apparatus.

The image that Argentina is to be led down a path by the United States also finds expression in a letter that the Argentine Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vice Admiral Storni, wrote to the Secretary of State a few weeks later, on July 29, 1943. Pleading for patience while the Argentine government decides whether to join the Allies, Storni writes,

*“You, Mr. Secretary, citizen of a country that venerates freedom of conscience, will acknowledge that it is not possible, without preliminary preparation, to force the Argentine conscience with a view to leading it coldly and without any immediate motive to the breaking of relations with the Axis.”*²⁸

²⁶ Welles, Sumner. Telegram from the Under Secretary of State to Ambassador in Argentina.” June 28, 1943. FRUS, 1943. American Republics, Vol. V. P. 423.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Storni, Segundo. Telegram from Storni to the Secretary of State (Translated). August 5, 1943. FRUS, 1943. American Republics, Vol. V. Pp. 445-449.

Here, the path imagery is reversed and takes on a negative connotation. For the Argentine minister, Argentina is being forcibly led, whereas in Welles' rhetoric it was Argentina who refused to follow.

3. Argentina in Roosevelt's Discourse: Threats to the Hemispheric Body

Until the US went to war with the Axis Powers in December of 1941, Argentina's refusal to join the anti-Fascist cause provoked little comment. However, President Roosevelt's Third Inaugural Address and his Fireside Chat 18 from September 1941 illustrate Washington's growing anxiety over German presence in the Western Hemisphere and consequently its growing suspicion of Latin American governments that did not join the US in denouncing fascism. While in his First Inaugural Address in 1933 Roosevelt had initiated the hands-off Good Neighbor Policy toward Latin America, by the time of his Third Inaugural Address the President's tone had changed, and he began to describe the Western Hemisphere as a political unit that only the United States could defend. Consider, for example, this excerpt from the Third Inaugural Address, given on January 20, 1941, in which Roosevelt touts democratic values and makes the case against isolationism. Speaking about democracy, Roosevelt says, "In the Americas its impact has been irresistible. America has been the New World in all tongues, to all peoples, not because this continent was a new-found land, but because all those who came here believed they could create upon this continent a new life—a life that should be new in freedom."²⁹

Later, on September 11, 1941 Roosevelt delivered Fireside Chat 18, "On the Greer Incident." In this address, Roosevelt builds on the themes he developed in his Third Inaugural Address about the special, democratic character of the Western Hemisphere.

²⁹ Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Third Inaugural Address," in *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Great Speeches*. (New York: Dover, 1999), 103.

Making the case to a pre-Pearl Harbor America for more US involvement against the Axis, Roosevelt uses the attack on the US destroyer the *Greer* to prove a Nazi plan to dominate the seas— and the Western Hemisphere, whose exceptionalism he touted earlier in the same year.

Several aspects of this speech are worth noting. First, Roosevelt repeatedly refers to the fact that defending all of the Western Hemisphere and the seas around it is essential for US security and US commercial interests. The speech echoes the 1823 Monroe Doctrine in its belief that pernicious European activities in the Western Hemisphere were an affront to the United States that could merit US reaction. The President talks about Nazi, “domination of the United States (and the)—domination of the Western Hemisphere by force of arms,” but also about the commercial interests that are at stake in the US and in all of the “American Republics.” These commercial interests necessitate freedom of the seas, which Nazi Germany threatened:

“It is the Nazi design to abolish the freedom of the seas, and to acquire absolute control and domination of (the) these seas for themselves.

For with control of the seas in their own hands, the way can obviously become clear for their next step—domination of the United States (and the)—domination of the Western Hemisphere by force of arms. Under Nazi control of the seas, no merchant ship of the United States or of any other American Republic would be free to carry on any peaceful commerce, except by the condescending grace of this foreign and tyrannical power. [...]

The Hitler Government, in defiance of the laws of the sea, (and) in defiance of the recognized rights of all other nations, has presumed to declare, on paper, that great areas of the seas—even including a vast expanse lying in the Western Hemisphere—are to be closed, and that no ships may enter them for any purpose, except at peril of being sunk. [...]

Second, Roosevelt speaks of Nazi conspiracies in the “New World,” combining Latin America and the US in the same category. In using the term New World to refer to all of the Western Hemisphere, Roosevelt validates his determination to protect the Western Hemisphere from such European influences as Washington deems threatening. The speech invokes another European menace from the less distant past: Roosevelt uses the idea of “Hitler’s advance guard” preparing “footholds” and “bridgeheads” in the New World in a statement that was likely meant to inspire comparisons to the infamous Zimmerman Telegram, in which Kaiser Wilhelm sought to court the Mexican government as a way of threatening the US via its southern neighbors. Roosevelt claims the right to speak for the entire Western Hemisphere and to protect it from a European menace; by definition the “Old World” has no rights in the “New.”

This Nazi attempt to seize control of the oceans is but a counterpart of the Nazi plots now being carried on throughout the Western Hemisphere—all designed toward the same end. For Hitler’s advance guards—not only his avowed agents but also his dupes among us—have sought to make ready for him footholds, (and) bridgeheads in the New World, to be used as soon as he has gained control of the oceans.

Third, Roosevelt praises the government of Argentina for “carefully and wisely” blocking Nazi infiltration. This speech predates Pearl Harbor and the 1942 conference in Rio de Janeiro at which Argentina defied US wishes and maintained its neutrality. It is evident that at this time Roosevelt did not expect Latin American nations to sever diplomatic relations with Japan or Germany (the US hadn’t yet done so), only to resist the influence and incursions of those governments. It was only after the US declared war on Japan and after Germany declared war on the US that the Rio conference was convened and Argentina’s refusal to formally sever diplomatic relations with the Axis became a problem.

From that time forward, US attitudes toward Argentina changed, and Argentina's neutrality was interpreted as its willingness to provide Nazis and Italian fascists a safe haven.

His [Hitler's] intrigues, his plots, his machinations, his sabotage in this New World are all known to the Government of the United States. Conspiracy has followed conspiracy. For example, last year a plot to seize the Government of Uruguay was smashed by the prompt action of that country, which was supported in full by her American neighbors. A like plot was then hatching in Argentina, and that government has carefully and wisely blocked it at every point. More recently, an endeavor was made to subvert the government of Bolivia. And within the past few weeks the discovery was made of secret air-landing fields in Colombia, within easy range of the Panama Canal. I could multiply instance(s) upon instance. [...]

Fourth, Roosevelt's speech reveals how the US government viewed the Nazis as an ideological threat. He warns: "The danger is here now—not only from a military enemy but from an enemy of all law, all liberty, all morality, all religion. [...] It is clear to all Americans that the time has come when the Americas themselves must now be defended." By casting the Nazi threat in moral terms, as a menace to "all American values" rather than just to its commercial or military interests, Roosevelt built support for further US involvement in support of the Allies.

It is time for all Americans, Americans of all the Americas to stop being deluded by the romantic notion that the Americas can go on living happily and peacefully in a Nazi-dominated world. [...]

No tender whisperings of appeasers that Hitler is not interested in the Western Hemisphere, no soporific lullabies that a wide ocean protects us from him—can long have any effect on the hard-headed, far-sighted and realistic American people. [...]
The Nazi danger to our Western world has long ceased to be a mere possibility. The danger is here now—not only from a military enemy but from an enemy of all law, all liberty, all morality, all religion. [...]

It is clear to all Americans that the time has come when the Americas themselves must now be defended. [...]

That is my obvious duty in this crisis. That is the clear right of this sovereign nation. (That_ This [sic] is the only step possible, if we would keep tight the wall of defense which we are pledged to maintain around this Western Hemisphere.”³⁰

With so much at stake, Roosevelt – and by implication the American people – could neither tolerate neutrality in the Western Hemisphere, nor abandon efforts to root out Nazis in Latin America, however small the strategic risk they may have presented—and even after World War II was over. Argentina was to learn this lesson before long.

4. Nazis in Argentina and the US Response

The Argentine Papers from 1943 show that conflicting accounts came from Buenos Aires about the military government’s intentions for Argentina’s foreign policy toward the Axis. One memorandum from Hoover to Hopkins reports that the Undersecretary of State in Argentina had claimed that Argentina had in fact been on the point of breaking ties with the Axis in 1943, but that Cordell Hull’s pressuring to that end had, “so inflamed the minds of the members of the Government that the proposed resolution was left unfinished. He [the Argentine Undersecretary] stated that although Argentina intended a break of relations, she would not be forced into doing so by anyone.”³¹ Another letter claims that the reason Argentine leaders had not broken with the Axis was “because they are being blackmailed by Germany. The Germans have let these men [Argentine Colonels and Generals] know that on the very day Argentina breaks relations with the Axis, Germany will

³⁰ Roosevelt, Franklin Delano. “Fireside Chat 18: On the Greer Incident (September 11, 1941). Miller Center of Public Affairs. University of Virginia. Accessed December 15, 2010. <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3323>

³¹ Hoover, J. Edgar. Memorandum to Harry Hopkins. November 27, 1943. The Argentine Papers of the Franklin Roosevelt Library, Vol. 1.

publish a complete list of the names of Argentine officers who have been on the Nazi pay roll together with the amounts received, and compromising documents.”³² Of course, this is exactly the kind of list Braden commissioned and circulated in the form of the Blue Book, to little effect.³³

While the documents make clear Washington’s frustration with Argentina’s disobedience, officials in Washington understood the necessity of publicly appearing less controlling of Latin America. A January 15, 1944 Memorandum from Assistant Solicitor General Oscar Cox to Hopkins cautions that if the US were to freeze Argentine assets in the US as a way of punishing Argentina for its neutrality, “discussions ought to be had with some of the other South and Central American Republics so that the move would not look like one of Yankee Imperialism.”³⁴

US bureaucrats were apparently willing to work with Argentina privately in an effort to preserve good relations, rather than simply making public accusations against Argentina. In one instance in late 1942, Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles alluded publicly to Nazi activity in Argentina. This prompted the Argentine government to lodge a formal protest. In response, the FBI prepared a memorandum detailing Nazi activities in Argentina, which the Bureau then privately circulated to Harry Hopkins, the State Department, the Argentine Foreign Office, and the Argentine Ambassador in Washington

³² Hoover, J. Edgar. FBI Memorandum to Harry Hopkins. December 9, 1943. The Argentine Papers of the Franklin Roosevelt Library, Vol. 1.

³³ Schmitz, David F. *Thank God They’re on Our Side: The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1921-1965*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999),135.

³⁴ Memorandum from Assistant Solicitor General Oscar Cox to Harry Hopkins. January 15, 1944. The Argentine Papers of the Franklin Roosevelt Library, Vol. 1.

on November 4, 1942 in order to avoid a public quarrel.³⁵

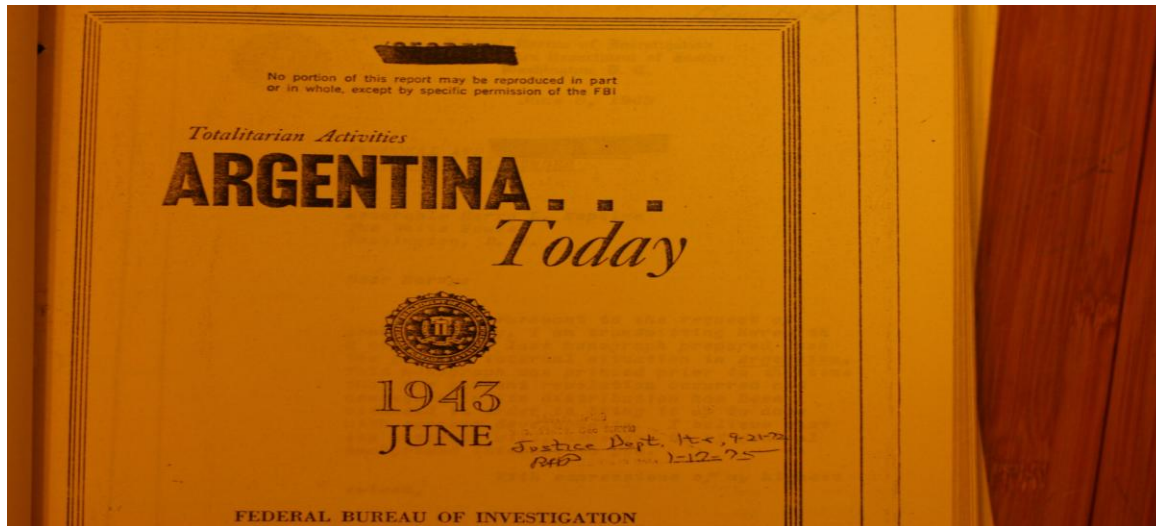
Within their own circle, US policymakers investigated other, quieter ways to encourage the Argentine government to comply with their wishes. A letter from Hoover to Hopkins, dated December 15, 1943, informs the reader that a Chilean source had indicated that the “Colonels Group” running the Argentine government was prepared to accept cash payment from the United States in exchange for breaking with the Axis. This group included Perón. As far as is known, however, no such payment was made.

Rather than paying off Perón and his colleagues, the State Department sought to discredit them in inter-American forums. In advance of the February 1945 Inter-American Conference in Mexico City, the State Department requested that the FBI “assist by submitting documentary evidence and factual data concerning Argentine collaboration with the Axis for possible use at the Conference.” Such documents were accordingly provided, including “numerous memoranda concerning individuals and organizations in Argentina, and documentary evidence of espionage activities, such as secret writing and coded communications, as well as copies of statements of notorious agents.” According to Hoover, what he calls the “factual data” in these documents prove that “Argentina was the headquarters of Axis activities in the Western Hemisphere.” Furthermore, Hoover cites “evidence of Argentine intrigue” against the United States and “combating United States influence in Latin America.”³⁶ To this letter, Hoover attaches a summary of the documentary evidence he had forwarded to the State Department. These sources from the Argentine Papers, such as the one pictured below with the menacing title of “Totalitarian

³⁵ Hoover, J. Edgar. FBI Memorandum to Harry Hopkins. November 7, 1942. The Argentine Papers of the Franklin Roosevelt Library, Vol. 1.

³⁶ All citations in this paragraph from Hoover, J. Edgar. Memorandum to Harry Hopkins. February 22, 1945. The Argentine Papers of the Franklin Roosevelt Library, Vol. 2.

Activities in Argentina Today,” show how those in Washington conceived of the Argentine problem and its implications for the United States government.



5. The Question of Unity

Even after the war in Europe had ended, the issue of how to deal with Argentina’s noncooperation with US expectations exposed the tensions inherent in Good Neighbor Policy and Braden’s controversial tenure in Argentina. In the August 1945 Senate hearings concerning Braden’s appointment to Assistant Secretary of State, Senators Vandenberg and Connally delayed approval of Braden’s nomination, arguing that Braden’s brashness in Argentina was undermining the unity of the hemisphere and thus endangering the United Nations. Proponents of *ideological* unity such as Braden clashed with advocates of *practical* unity such as Vandenberg and Connally, who wanted to keep the inter-American diplomatic system functioning regardless of quarrels between the US and individual countries. This is not to say that one group followed the Good Neighbor Policy and the other did not, but rather that reasonable people could disagree about what the principle of non-interference (as opposed to that of non-intervention) really meant.

The proponents of practical unity considered it most important that conferences and treaties include all Latin American nations and that the Western Hemisphere present a united front to the rest of the world. They therefore objected to Braden's appointment as Under-Secretary because Braden, in an effort to pressure Argentina to do more to expose Nazis in that country, had postponed and nearly derailed the October 1945 Rio conference, which all Western Hemisphere nations were slated to attend. For Vandenberg, Connally, and other pragmatists, Braden's "pressuring the other American republics to accept postponement of the forthcoming October 1945 Rio conference [...] on the grounds that the United States could not collaborate in a collective defense treaty with an Argentine government that had failed to meet its Chapultepec commitments [by failing to act against Axis figures within its borders]" had unnecessarily endangered the hemispheric system, placing US ideology over inter-American cooperation.³⁷

The pragmatists wanted unity they could see—in conference attendance and compacts signed—whereas Braden and his supporters wanted unity based on shared acceptance of liberal values. Neither group advocated military intervention; both groups thought that they were acting in accordance with the Good Neighbor Policy. In neither the Vandenberg/Connally camp nor the Braden camp it seems, was unity not a priority, and as the *Time* article to be examined here indicates, many thought, paradoxically, that respecting each nation's independence and sovereignty was the key to regional unity.

³⁷ Trask, Roger R., "Spruille Braden versus George Messersmith: World War II, the Cold War, and Argentine Policy, 1945-1947," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Feb., 1984): 77.

6. *Argentina to Braden: Fascist and Communist*

One of Roosevelt's last acts as President was to appoint Spruille Braden as US Ambassador to Argentina. By the time Braden moved from his post in Havana to the ambassadorship in Buenos Aires in May of 1945, Argentina had become a thorn in the side of US policymakers, and the post was considered among the most important and most difficult diplomatic appointments, despite the fact that the war in Europe was over and the Nazi threat no longer loomed. Relations had somewhat normalized after March 3, 1945, when Argentina attended the Inter-American Conference on War and Peace at Mexico City and signed the Act of Chapultepec, thereby committing to hemispheric solidarity and symbolically rejoining the fold by agreeing, among other anti-Axis steps, to cancel the citizenship of convicted Axis spies.³⁸ And, on March 27 of 1945, Argentina had declared war on the Axis. However, US policymakers were still divided over how best to reintegrate Argentina into the diplomatic community, and what role to allow Argentina in the United Nations. International relations specialist Raymond L. Buell wrote to Braden on the occasion of his appointment to the ambassadorship in Argentina, saying, "Certainly it is the toughest job on this continent, but you are the best qualified to do it."³⁹ Representatives of the business world, too, wrote to express their congratulations. C. Russell Feldman, President of the International Detrola Corporation, wrote, "From my reading of the newspapers, it appears that Argentina will continue to be a hot spot for a long time,

³⁸ Anthony Mango and Edmund Jan Osmańczyk, ed. *Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Agreements. Volume 1: A-F*. (New York: Taylor & Francis Books, 2003)

³⁹ Buell, Raymond L. Letter to Spruille Braden. April 23, 1945. The Papers of Spruille Braden, Box 18. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

especially since it is likely to be one of the places where we will have a constant tug of war with our British friends for important Latin American trade.”⁴⁰

Reading Braden’s 1971 memoirs, *Diplomats and Demagogues*, however, one gets the impression that Braden saw his role in Buenos Aires as defending democratic principles more than battling over US trade interests. During and after his appointment in Buenos Aires, Braden referred to the freeing of political prisoners in Argentina as his greatest diplomatic achievement in the country. He begins the section of *Diplomats and Demagogues* devoted to his time in Argentina with the sentence, “Before I left Washington I learned that from 1,000 to 1,500 political prisoners were being held in Argentine prisons. Many of them I knew, and one, Enrique Gil, had been my close personal friend since 1917 or 1918.”⁴¹ Braden goes on to describe how, within minutes of arriving in Buenos Aires, he secured Gil’s release.

As Max Paul Friedman writes in *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II*, the US detained more than 4,000 German expatriates living in Latin America and interned them in camps in the Texas desert during the Second World War, though no such detentions were made of Germans living in the U.S. According to Friedman,

“The US government pursued two different policies toward German alien enemies depending upon where they lived because of the US view of Latin America as a vulnerable, dependent region where latinos are helpless and foreigners are the real actors; because of the poor quality of the intelligence operation that was supposed to find subversives to the south; and because

⁴⁰ Feldman, C. Russell. Letter to Spruille Braden. May 25, 1945. The Papers of Spruille Braden, Box 18. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

⁴¹ Braden, Spruille. *Diplomats and Demagogues*. (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1971), 321.

Germans living in Latin America presented another challenge: they were making important inroads in Latin American markets.”⁴²

Several of Braden’s comments about the Argentines he met support Friedman’s allegation that the US treated Latin Americans with condescension and, as we have seen in Roosevelt’s speeches, feared foreign puppeteers in Latin America. In a June 21, 1945 letter to Garret G. Ackerson, Jr., Braden wrote, “It is astonishing that despite the defeat of Germany these ‘babies’ still continue their Nazi gibberish and apparently have no idea whatsoever of what they signed at Chapultepec, nor of meeting any of their obligations excepting as they are forced to do so. On my arrival here I found conditions just as bad as they had been at the worst of the period before they were admitted to the American family of nations.”⁴³ Throughout the Argentina chapter of his memoir, Braden describes Peron as a volatile and irrational actor. He writes that, “it was always Peron’s policy to eliminate all decent and patriotic officers.”⁴⁴ Braden also reports that he told representatives of the US business community that Peron “is a crook. He’s fascist by temperament, and he hates the United States. Besides, his economic policy is unsound.”⁴⁵ Braden was so blinded by personal hostility toward the disobedient Perón that, rather than sticking to the facts of Perón’s tolerance of Nazi refugees, for example, he constructed contradictory narratives about Perón and the Argentine people, whom he judged duplicitous and in the hands of foreigners. The code words for these Argentina’s failings were indiscriminately fascist and communist.

⁴² Friedman, Max Paul. *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.

⁴³ Braden, Spruille. Letter to Garrett G. Ackerson, Jr. June 21, 1945. The Papers of Spruille Braden, Braden Box 18. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

⁴⁴ Braden, *Diplomats and Demagogues*, 332.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 340.

With characteristically colorful language, Braden alternates between portraying Peron as a fascist and portraying him as a communist. He writes of the Chilean Ambassador Quintana that,

*"He had confided to me his conviction that Peron and the Communists were working hand in glove and forming a menacing alliance. Therefore, on July 5 [1945] I sent a cable to Washington, with copies to Ambassadors Claude Bowers in Chile and Adolf Berle in Brazil, giving Quintana's information which confirmed my previous reports to the Department. I urged that at the forthcoming Potsdam Conference [July 16 to August 2, 1945] President Truman and Secretary Byrnes demand that Stalin tell them what he was up to in spreading Communism in Latin America, and playing footsy with Peron."*⁴⁶

According to Braden, however, the State Department never received the cables he sent. In an almost paranoid expression of anger, Braden speculated that a code room employee "in sympathy with Communism or in Communist pay" could have intercepted the message.⁴⁷

If in *Diplomats and Demagogues* Braden depicts Perón as alternately a Hitlerian fascist and a Stalinist communist, Braden depicts himself in a consistent form—as the champion of democratic values. Though Braden attributes the attacks that were made on him during his ambassadorship as low, ad hominem blows, he attributes the praise he received not to his personal magnetism but to "an outpouring of enthusiasm for the principles I stood for as American Ambassador and defended in all my speeches: the traditional American principles of freedom and constitutional representative republican government."⁴⁸ Braden contrasts these high ideals with what he calls the demagoguery of the Argentinean government, and particularly Peron. Yet, as Braden writes that he

⁴⁶ Braden, *Diplomats and Demagogues*, 334.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 334-335.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 336-337.

admitted to the British Ambassador to Argentina, the policy that the US had pursued in promoting its principles in Argentina “added up to utter confusion.”⁴⁹ This confusion is unsurprising given the tensions in Washington over whether the US should promote practical or ideological unity in the Western Hemisphere.

Taken as a whole, what do these sections of the Braden memoir reveal about US-Argentine relations during and just after World War II? Braden portrays himself as the only voice of reason in the US foreign policy apparatus when it came to Argentina, against whom the “appeasers” (those in favor of a conciliatory treatment of Perón), “the Communists”, “agents of Trujillo and Peron” (those supporting the Dominican and Argentinean dictators), and the military were arrayed.⁵⁰ In referring to “the appeasers”, by which he meant those who favored negotiating with the Argentinean military government, Braden adopts the language used in reference to the Munich Conference. It is the same term invoked by Roosevelt in Fireside Chat 18, when the President cautioned against, “tender whisperings of appeasers that Hitler is not interested in the Western Hemisphere.” The dread of repeating Chamberlain’s mistake had by this time pervaded US political discourse.⁵¹

In private communications written during his ambassadorship, Braden was no less critical of Perón and his sympathizers than he is in his memoir. There, Braden views Argentina without the filters of elapsed time, imperfect memory, and self-promotion that make memoirs like *Diplomats and Demagogues* problematic as historical sources. While in Buenos Aires, Braden wrote many candid letters to Ellis Briggs, a colleague in the Foreign

⁴⁹ Ibid, 338.

⁵⁰ Braden, *Diplomats and Demagogues*, 339.

⁵¹ For the impact on American politics of lessons from the appeasement of Hitler see Morgan, Patrick, “Saving Face for the Sake of Deterrence,” in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, ed., *Psychology and Deterrence*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1985), 125-152.

Service. In a July 28, 1945 letter to Briggs at the American embassy in Chungking, Braden wrote:

"On the political front, Perón is a megalomaniac Nazi (every bit as genuinely sincere as Hitler) and I mean just that, nothing else. He is surrounded by a group, mainly of military officers, who are exactly of the same ilk. They all work in closest cooperation and with the advice of the German Nazis in this country. In other words, here is the foundation for the continuance of Fascism and the starting point for the next war. [...] In short, we do not have to deal with a stereotyped Latin American dictator or military oligarchy, but are faced with a much more fundamental problem. Right here in America we have the tumor of Fascism with its Government in control and that control including the Army with its machine guns, tanks, airplanes, etc., a people with a peculiar psychology combining excessive vanity with utter supineness, and the fact that this country has not enjoyed a functional democracy in some seventeen years. [...] The parallel with the Fascist nations in Europe is identical in every particular. [...] So serious have I considered the long pull effects of this Argentine condition—you will note I call it the "Argentine condition" and not the "Argentine question"—that I strongly urged President Truman discussing the matter with Churchill and now with Attlee in order to get full British cooperation. [...] I have likewise strongly recommended that the President obtain a definition from Uncle Joe of just what the Russians have in mind in their activities in the Western Hemisphere."⁵²

Here again in the space of a single page of a letter are alternate warnings against Nazi fascism and plots by "Uncle Joe" to spread Communism. These observations conform to Oxford Latin Americanist Alan Knight's theory about populism in Latin America—that it is a political style without an inherent content, a vessel that can be filled with varying

⁵² Braden, Spruille. Letter to Ellis Briggs. July 28, 1945. The Papers of Spruille Braden, Box 18. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

ideologies.⁵³ US policymakers saw Peron's populist government as a mutable ill that could threaten from both the right and the left.

Indeed, Perón did play to both the right and left in Argentina, and the movement that bears his name is not easy to define, in part because it has resurfaced so many times and in so many guises.⁵⁴ For Argentine political theorist Ernesto Laclau, the vagueness of Peronist populism actually converted the notion of "the people" into what he calls an "empty signifier."⁵⁵ It is clear, though, that the Argentine nationalists with whom Perón came to power in the coup of 1943 in fact had more of an affinity with Italian fascism and with the nationalist "Hispanidad" of Franco than with Nazism.⁵⁶ This was due in part to the presence of Italian immigrants in Argentina and also to Italian fascist efforts to woo Argentines, whom they believed "represented Latin America's link to Europe rather than to the United States," and whose comparative whiteness they viewed as a sign of superiority to other Latin American nations.⁵⁷ Because Latin American populism often defines itself in opposition to US hegemony, it is not surprising that Perón's populism inspired nervousness in Washington.

Yet there is more to Braden's description of Peronist Argentina than simple distaste for populism. Again we see the depiction of Perón as irrational, here a "megalomaniac." Further, Braden repeatedly invokes the metaphor of illness. He writes of "the tumor of

⁵³ Knight, Alan, "Populism and Neo-populism in Latin America, especially Mexico." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 30, (1998): 223-248.

⁵⁴ For a survey of the literature on Peronism from Perón to the 1990s see Brennan, James P, ed. *Peronism and Argentina*. (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1998)

⁵⁵ Marchart, Oliver, "In the Name of the People" Populist Reason and the Subject of the Political," *Diacritics*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2005): 3-19.

⁵⁶ For more on this see Finchelstein, Federico. *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 161.

⁵⁷ Finchelstein, Federico. *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 85.

Fascism,” the “peculiar psychology” of the Argentineans, the dysfunctional democracy in the country, and finally the “Argentine condition.” In a September 1945 address entitled “The Good Neighbor,” Braden called fascism “gangrene” and appeasement a “sad ailment,” neither of which Washington would tolerate in the Western Hemisphere.⁵⁸ These remarks conform to what George Lakoff in *The Political Mind* classifies as a ubiquitous “primary” metaphor linking morality to health and immorality to disease.⁵⁹ By speaking of metaphorical tumors and ailments that could afflict the Western Hemisphere, Braden represents the Western Hemisphere as a corporeal unit, a body in effect, that is “infected” by a disease in one of its parts, showing himself to be under the influence of a Monroe Doctrine view of the hemisphere and the US role there.

7. *The “Argentine Condition,” the Press, and the Body Metaphor*

Braden’s use of the body metaphor and the discourse of irrationality and disease in his discussion of Argentina in the 1940s is echoed in the periodicals of the same period and their treatment of the US-Argentina feud. By examining periodical sources on the subject of this feud we can see two things: First, the extent to which journalistic sources corroborate Braden’s story of his work in Argentina. Second, whether journalists at the time used the same patterns of language to describe Argentina that Braden used.

On November 5, 1945, *Time* chose Spruille Braden for its cover story, featuring a drawing of Braden in front of a South America made of leaves, with swastikas concentrated around Buenos Aires and the caption, “Sometimes sovereignty is more precious than

⁵⁸ Braden, Spruille, “The Good Neighbor Policy,” *State Department Bulletin* (Volume XIII, No.323, September 2nd 1945) p. 327

⁵⁹ Lakoff, George. *The Political Mind*. (New York: Penguin, 2008), 97.

liberty.”⁶⁰ Although the article is critical of Braden, it describes Latin American and Argentina in the same stereotyped, condescending terms as did Braden. Even though the profile calls Braden a “bull in the Latin American china shop” whose object is to “smash the Western Hemisphere’s dictatorial bric-a-brac,” its author claims that, “never had the prideful, sensitive, yearning Latins had to deal on a Hemispheric scale with such a North American.” Here we see a stereotyped vision of Latin American people, but also an approximation of Braden’s self-assessment as a tougher diplomat than his predecessors in the region.



⁶⁰ All citations from this article are from “Latin America: Democracy’s Bull,” *Time*, Volume XLVI, No. 19 (Nov. 5, 1945).

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,852408,00.html#ixzz1CjHzLUPF>

The *Time* profile mirrors Braden's own description of his aggressive diplomatic style and role as champion of democracy. The piece clearly articulates the dilemma facing Roosevelt's policymakers, including Braden:

"For Spruille Braden, in his big person and his big ideals, embodied the great paradox confronting the U.S. in Latin America. The U.S. officially, and Braden personally, propose to uphold the U.S. idea of liberty in all the Western Hemisphere. Yet the U.S., as the greatest of western nations, and Braden as its servant, must recognize that sovereignty—especially sovereignty below the Rio Grande—is sometimes more precious than liberty."

The author of the article has grasped the essential problem of American policy. The Good Neighbor Policy seemed to necessitate more tolerance of ideological diversity within the Western Hemisphere than many—Braden included—were inclined to accept. In his memoir, Braden does not mention this tension, but rather presents his push for ideological unity under the U.S banner as the only principled course of action.

The *Time* article disagrees:

"So far, the Braden doctrine and the Braden way have failed in their most conspicuous, most important test—in Argentina. There, at the crest of his career as a Hemisphere Ambassador, Braden early this year locked horns with Dictator Juan Domingo Perón, threw every personal and official weight against him, and for a time seemed to be winning. Hundreds of thousands of Argentine students, workers, businessmen, army men, politicians rallied to Spruille Braden's call: "We . . . must and will establish . . . the inviolable sovereignty of people. But the triumph was short; Perón no sooner fell than he rose again like Antaeus, seemingly stronger than ever (TIME, Oct. 29). Braden's confirmation as Assistant Secretary was before the Senate, and his critics set upon him in full cry. They had a case."

This is a less rosy assessment than the one Braden gives in his memoir. Yet the *Time* piece, though critical, blames the failure of Braden's efforts as much on supposed "Latin" traits as on the diplomat's shortcomings, claiming, "Spruille Braden himself was well aware that Latin sovereignty, Latin pride and—probably more often than he would like—Latin sloth were involved." As the language in this magazine article shows, even very European Argentina was considered to be prey to stereotyped character flaws attributed to Latin Americans. One wonders, then, how viable a policy of hemispheric equality and mutual respect could ever have been in a time when the US not only was engaged in a world war but when US writers apparently held such negative opinions of their southern neighbors.

The *Time* article is as interesting for what it omits as for what it includes. Other than the swastikas dotting Argentina on the cover of the magazine, there are no direct or indirect references to Braden's attempts to rout Nazism in Argentina. The article does mention Braden's successful 1940 effort to make Pan American Airlines eject the German airline Scadta from Panama, which the magazine attributes to "one of his [Braden's] favorite theses: that Naziism, wherever and however it infiltrated Latin America, had to be and could be eradicated." By the time this piece came out in November of 1945 WWII had ended, but it is still notable that, unlike Braden's memoir, the *Time* article neglects to mention the Nazi threat in Argentina or Braden's crusade against it. This suggests that the author of the piece found the "Argentine condition" interesting as an example of Latin American defiance of US wishes, not as the root of a military or strategic threat.

On March 25, 1946, Spruille Braden was the subject of another profile—this time in *Life* magazine. The *Life* article was more laudatory than the *Time* profile had been, but still downplays the fascist threat in Argentina. John K. Jessup's *Life* profile of Braden bore the

subtitle: “Our battling Assistant Secretary of State has lost round one to Argentina’s Perón, but he and his cause have staying power.” It opens by acknowledging that, “The U.S. has just suffered a sharp diplomatic setback in the Argentine elections,” referring to the victory of Perón. The article depicts Braden as a man of principle, someone committed to fighting totalitarianism everywhere. Jessup contrasts this attitude with that of Cordell Hull, who “used to vent his spleen against Argentina, while showing tolerant indifference to Trujillo and other dictators,”⁶¹ again revealing how US policymakers enacted competing interpretations of Good Neighbor Policy—sometimes respecting sovereignty in the name of practical unity and sometimes challenging it in the name of liberal principles. A run-of-the-mill Latin American dictator like Trujillo was apparently more tolerable to Hull than a quasi-fascist dictator like Perón, even though Perón’s election to the presidency was far cleaner than Trujillo’s.

Like the article in *Time* from the previous year, the 1946 *Life* profile of Braden downplays the fascist threat in Argentina, saying that “Argentina does not look like the world’s most formidable menace to peace just now and neither does fascism.” The article does, however, hint at a communist threat that could develop under Perón. Jessup writes that Braden “knows Communism to be as great a potential danger to Latin America as Peronism is now, and he doubtless takes a grim pride in the fact that the Communists, who bitterly opposed Perón, have already begun to semaphore a change in that line. A Soviet trade mission is en route to Buenos Aires.”⁶² Not surprisingly, the article written in 1946 is

⁶¹ All quotes in this paragraph from Jessup, John K, “Spruille Braden: Our battling Assistant Secretary of State has lost one round to Argentina’s Perón, but he and his cause have staying power,” *Life*. March 25, 1946.

⁶² Ibid.

more concerned with communism than with fascism. Argentina as a potential fascist problem is here becoming Argentina as a potential communist problem.

Both articles speak to the unorthodox nature of Braden's diplomatic style. As Roger Trask wrote, "Braden did not conduct himself according to the usual roles of diplomatic practice. But he did not feel that he had acted improperly, and the State Department, by moving him into the principal position responsible for Latin American affairs, seemed to be endorsing his conduct."⁶³

Writers for *The Nation* tended to praise Braden and his approach to diplomacy. *The Nation* also ran a series of anti-Perón articles, including one titled, "Perón: the South American Hitler" in February 1946. That piece, which praises Argentines as, "beneath layers of materialistic fat [...] brave and liberty-loving people," invokes the threat of a nuclear Argentina if Perón wins the election: "If the Argentine strong man becomes Argentine President next week, the situation in South American will continue to be dynamite—or uranium."⁶⁴ Writers for *The Nation* found other ways to express their disdain for Perón, sometimes overtly and sometimes by putting quotes around the words "legal" and "election" to convey their cynicism about Argentinean democracy.⁶⁵ Braden, however, is always depicted as a defender of liberal values in *The Nation's* articles from the period.

An incident involving *New York Times* correspondent Arnaldo Cortesi, corroborates Braden's glowing account of his achievements in defense of free press in Argentina. The

⁶³ Trask, Roger R. (of the Historical Office in the Office of the Secretary of Defense), "Spruille Braden versus George Messersmith: World War II, the Cold War, and Argentine Policy, 1945-1947," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Feb., 1984): 69-95.

⁶⁴ Ross, Stanley, "Perón: South American Hitler." *The Nation*, (February 16, 1946): 189-194.

⁶⁵ For example, "A Proposal for Action by the United Nations." *The Nation*, (February 2, 1946): 140-142.

articles of Cortesi are of interest because in 1946 Cortesi was awarded a Pulitzer Prize “For distinguished correspondence during the year 1945, as exemplified by his reports from Buenos Aires, Argentina.”⁶⁶ Cortesi gained some fame when, in June of 1945, he sent a dispatch to the *New York Times* titled, “All Freedom Found Ended in Argentina,” referring to the censorship and imprisonment of members of the press working in Argentina.⁶⁷ Cortesi’s dispatch mentions Enrique Gil, whose freedom Braden writes of securing on his first day of official duties in Buenos Aires. *Time* covered Cortesi’s dispatch on press censorship on June 18, 1945, under the title “Mr. Cortesi Gets Mad.”⁶⁸ In his memoir, Braden writes of heroically fighting for more freedom of the press—a fight that seems justified given that many other sources complain about Argentine censorship. Braden’s account may not have been exaggerated, for on September 16, 1945, Cortesi wrote that Braden had exacted a promise from the Argentine Under-Secretary of Information and Press, “that there would be no further interference with outgoing or incoming messages of United States correspondents and news agencies.”⁶⁹

Cortesi’s prize-winning accounts of political life in Argentina display similar patterns of language describing Argentina and Argentineans. On August 1, 1942, Cortesi described Argentina’s worry that, if Chile defected from the neutral bloc, Argentina would be the only country in the Western Hemisphere not to have broken ties with the axis. Cortesi acknowledges that, as President Castillo stated at the Rio conference, Argentina’s

⁶⁶ The Pulitzer Prize: Correspondence. <<http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/Correspondence>>

⁶⁷ Goldstein, Robert Justin. *Political Censorship*. (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), 184-185.

⁶⁸ “The Press: Mr. Cortesi Gets Mad.” *Time*. June 18, 1945.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,775939,00.html>

⁶⁹ Cortesi, Arnaldo. “Argentina Curbs News to U.S. Again.” *The New York Times*, September 16, 1945.

neutrality is merely “true to her traditional policy.” Is Cortesi referring to that country’s widely known tradition of neutrality in foreign wars?⁷⁰ No. Cortesi continues, “If there is anything that is constant in Argentina’s handling of her foreign affairs, it is her unwillingness to cooperate with the United States.”⁷¹ Cortesi fails to see neutrality as part of an independent tradition in Argentine foreign policy, and instead frames it as another affront to the United States, implicitly embracing the view of the hemisphere as a body with the US as its head.

8. The Fifth Column in Argentina

Later in the same article, Cortesi argues, “The fact remains, however, that Germany, Italy and Japan continue to have embassies at Buenos Aires, from which city it is possible to direct fifth column activities with other countries on this continent.” Cortesi’s use of “with” is significant: the implications is that other South American countries also have pro-fascist sympathizers, just like Argentina and thus that the hemisphere is a single unit, in which a fifth column festers. The term “fifth column,” first uttered in 1936 in Spanish in the context of the Spanish Civil War, quickly gained ground. As Dwight Bolinger has argued, it became “the great bugaboo of our age,” and, with blitzkrieg, “the most firmly rooted addition of recent years to the English vocabulary.”⁷² This phrase, used to describe a perfidious sector within a city, country, or region, necessarily implies the existence of an us-and-them scenario. In Cortesi’s usage, Argentina is providing safe haven for fifth columnists who could aid attacks on the Western Hemisphere. Roosevelt played on the same fears when he referred to the fifth column in Fireside Chat 15, warning that the dividing forces of the fifth

⁷⁰ See Lewis, Daniel K. *The History of Argentina*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 10.

⁷¹ Cortesi, Arnaldo. “Argentina Fears Isolation.” *The New York Times*, August 2, 1942.

⁷² Bolinger, Dwight L., “Fifth Column Marches On,” *American Speech*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Feb., 1944): 47-49.

column “must not be allowed to spread in the New World as they have in the Old.”⁷³

A *Harpers* article from August of 1947 titled, “What is Perón Up To” also mentions fifth columnists seeking refuge in Argentina, but by this point the conspirators are believed to be Communist fifth columnists, not fascist—though many Nazis had settled in Argentina. The article, which refers to Argentines as “proud and nationalistic in their very genes,”⁷⁴ claims that Perón is using economic, military, and diplomatic pressure to influence the other Latin American nations and woo them to his anti-US agenda. The article includes a drawing of Latin America with arrows originating in Buenos Aires and radiating out to countries as near as Chile and as far as the Dominican Republic. In the reverse of that image of influence radiating outward, the article closes by warning that Perón “is constructing a kind of giant diplomatic magnet. Its pull may well prove strong enough to drag into its destructive orbit enough countries to strain or split the entire framework of that inter-American system on which the American republics have labored with vitality and optimism for nearly two decades.”⁷⁵ While in this paragraph the author calls inter-American unity the shared work of the American republics only “for nearly two decades,” at the opening of the piece the author warns of the “dismemberment of that hemisphere unity which has been a traditional goal of the American republics.”⁷⁶ The metaphorical treatment of Argentina here is of a nation apart, a spreading ill that could “split” or “dismember” the unitary body of the Western Hemisphere.

⁷³ Roosevelt, Franklin D. “Fireside Chat 15: On National Defense.” (May 26, 1940). Miller Center of Public Affairs. <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3316?>

⁷⁴ Herling, John, “What is Perón Up To,” *Harpers*, 195: 1167. (Aug., 1947):180.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 188.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 179.

Conclusion: The Legacy of Anti-Argentina Rhetoric

The question at issue here is not: Was Argentina right not to break with the Axis, or was the United States right to pressure Argentina to do so? Rather, the question is how US observers and policymakers talked about the fascist influence in Argentina and how they placed that influence in the context of their vision of the US role in the hemisphere and in the world. The benefit of reading so many different kinds of sources is that we can see trends in speaking, writing, and thinking about the same topic at various levels of involvement in policymaking, from Roosevelt and the FBI documents to the *Time* and *Life* articles and to Braden's personal writings. Examining these sources shows that, even among those like Sumner Welles whom scholars have placed in the conciliatory, internationalist camp, assumptions about Argentine irrationality and fears of foreign influence in Western Hemisphere challenged the spirit of non-interference that accompanied the Good Neighbor Policy. These assumptions and fears manifested themselves in metaphors relating Argentina and/or foreign influences there to a disease infecting the body of the hemisphere and in metaphors describing Argentina as failing to keep pace with the other nations of the hemisphere.

This kind of metaphorical language used to describe Argentina and its role in the Western Hemisphere in the 1940s has had lasting consequences. Victoria Allison, in "White Evil: Peronist Argentina in the US Popular Imagination since 1955," tracks the legacy of anti-Peronist rhetoric in defining US visions of Argentina for decades after Peron's fall. She argues, "The campaign waged by Ambassador Spruille Braden and the US media in the

immediate postwar clearly had succeeded in convincing successive generations of Americans that Peronismo was an unequivocally Nazi-fascist movement.”⁷⁷

According to Allison, the 1960 capture of Adolf Eichmann from his home outside Buenos Aires restored US interest in Argentine history during the 1940s and 1950s, and “refreshed memories of Spruille Braden’s warnings about the existence of a Nazi Argentina. Eichmann’s capture proved beyond question that Spruille Braden was right in 1946: Argentina was a Nazi haven. Worse still, as his trial in Israel progressed, it became clear that the Nazis who escaped to Argentina associated almost exclusively with each other in the well-established German-Argentine communities that worried Americans during the war.”⁷⁸ Yet, despite this popular revulsion in the US against the Nazi presence in Argentina, the US government did little to aid the hunt for Nazis in that country. Allison attributes this inaction to the fact that, by the mid-1950s, Argentina had emerged as one of Washington’s strongest Latin American allies against Communism.

What is interesting, then, is the contrast between what we have seen was harsh and evocative rhetoric exhorting Argentina to conform to liberal values and reject fascism, and the few steps the US government took to root out Nazis in Argentina. In the following decades, US aid to right-wing dictatorships in Latin America and elsewhere would stand in even harsher contrast to the liberal values Braden claimed to defend. In fact, Braden himself went on, as a lobbyist for the United Fruit Company, to aid in the 1954 coup in

⁷⁷ Allison, Victoria, “White Evil: Peronist Argentina in the US Popular Imagination Since 1955,” *American Studies International*, Vol. XLII, No. 1. (February 2004): 16.

⁷⁸ Allison, “White Evil,” 24.

Guatemala.⁷⁹ The study of the US-Argentine feud of the 1940s reminds us that while rhetoric reveals patterns of thought it does not always shape patterns of behavior.

Of course, being a good neighbor doesn't have to mean tolerating any kind of activity in a neighboring country. Moreover, Braden's stridency and US chafing at Argentine neutrality were far from the gunboat diplomacy against which the Good Neighbor Policy was intended to guard. The incidents described here do not, then, somehow overthrow the letter of the Good Neighbor Policy (the US would do that with the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic)⁸⁰. Rather, as I have argued, they show that Braden, Roosevelt, members of the press, and those whom Woods deems "internationalists" shared a Monroe Doctrine-view of the US role in the Western Hemisphere, and so even the spirit of the Good Neighbor Policy was tinged with disdain for the Latin American nations and a belief in their inability to guard against foreign influence. Optimists in Latin America and the US had interpreted the Good Neighbor Policy as a signal not only of US military restraint but also of a new feeling of equality and mutual respect among the nations of the hemisphere.⁸¹ A close reading of the sources reveals, however, that the US attitude toward its southern neighbors was still more paternal than fraternal.

⁷⁹ Immerman, Richard. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 134.

⁸⁰ Max Paul Friedman, though, makes the claim that the Good Neighbor Policy was a convenience of peacetime and really ended with World War II in "There Goes the Neighborhood: Blacklisting Germans in Latin America and the Evanesence of the Good Neighbor Policy," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27, No. 3. (2003), 569-597.

⁸¹ See, for example, Stuart, Graham. "Implementing the Good Neighbor Policy," *World Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 3. (September, 1942), 211-216. Furniss, Jr., Edgar S., "American Wartime Objectives in Latin America," *World Politics*, Vol. 2., No. 3. (April, 1950): 373-389, or "On a Certain Impatience with Latin America," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 4. (Jul., 1950). 565-579.

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