

March 07, 1956
Telegram from Indian Embassy in Argentina on Antarctica Issue

Citation:

“Telegram from Indian Embassy in Argentina on Antarctica Issue,” March 07, 1956, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, File No: 25(I)-AMS/56. Obtained by Ryan Musto.
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Summary:

Argentina and Chile’s stance on sovereignty over Antarctica.

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Original Language:

English

Contents:

- English Transcription

SECRET

FROM: Indian Embassy, BA

TO: Foreign, New Delhi

TELEGRAM: 119/56

DATE: March 7, '56

Your telegram No. 1441 March 5. Explained to Subsecretario Castineiras who is handling this matter on lines of Hussain's telegram No. 1359 March 1st. Offered to explain to Foreign Minister also on same lines if necessary but he said he would first report matter he seems to be still apprehensive and raised one or two important points of interest. Past experience of Argentina he said was that all such international discussions directly or indirectly drew into question of Malvinas (Falklands, Falklands Dependencies, Orkistones, etc) on which Argentina felt very strongly. It was difficult to keep these out of discussion but they have to be kept out. Argentina claimed by way of extension of continental shelf all these and territories in mainland of Antarctica. Her stand has been that those territories by way of such extension belonged to her and partly to Chile. India therefore cannot admit of any international discussion as involved sovereignty of Argentina. Subsecretario Castineiras promised to send me a copy of Dr. Palacio's book on Malvinas by Argentina Delegate previously in international discussions. At my request he promised to send an approved map also. I told him that the explanatory memorandum which would be submitted by us to Secretary General would be shown to Argentina Delegation and that in future we would be consulting Argentina and other powers regarding steps we might take.

As regards claims that are being made by other countries and sudden interest evidenced by some others in Antarctica Castineiras said that as regards Britain at least there would not be much difficulty as there were good relations now subsisting with Britain and questions between two countries would be ultimately solved.

Castineiras appeared not to be quite satisfied even after explanations and assurances as he seems apprehensive of developments. He said debate often leads to some sort of decisions and that was the stage when there would be trouble as Argentina could not agree to any interference in her sovereignty over territories claimed by her.

Impressions: (I) I felt Argentinian Government would prefer let sleeping dogs lie. They have enough to do to consolidate position internally and are so much preoccupied with their own stability and domestic questions that they might not find sufficient time to give to other questions at present. Keen to avoid controversial issues initiating of which might underline differences of opinion with countries whose good will Argentina needs at present in rebuilding her economy. They are prone to feel that raising a debate like this at this psychological hour may therefore embarrass them and add to their difficulties.

(II) Yet another point by way of background: During Peron's regime there was great insistence on Argentina claims on Malvinas and Antarctica and considerable nationalist sentiment been whipped up on the issue. Unless present Government therefore pursued strong attitude in matter local opponents will capitalize situation by way of contrast. Our strong attitude may not help to fetch them financial and economic assistance from wealthier countries like Great Britain etc. Hence they would prefer postponement of question.