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COUNTRY Argentina

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

1. Dr. Karlo Balic, Rector of the Antonianum University in Rome and an internationally influential Croat, was the principal guest at the Conference of Franciscan Priests of Latin America which was held in Buenos Aires from 28 September to 4 October 1948. While in that city, Balic had a one-hour interview with President Peron in the Casa Rosada, at which time Peron spoke sympathetically of the ideological difficulties faced by various elements of the Croatian colony in Argentina and suggested that Balic, because of his recognized influence, advise local Croatian groups to unite and to support the Peronista social program. Balic was considerably impressed by the conversation and somewhat surprised that the President should ask him to intervene in the Croatian colony on behalf of the Argentine government.
2. When Balic related the President's proposal to local Croat Nationalist leaders, they affirmed their desire to respect, but not become compromised by, the Peron regime inasmuch as it is their belief that an alignment with the Argentine government and its "third position" would be viewed with disfavor by the United States government. They feel that the United States is the only country which can effectively assist them in achieving an independent Croatian state.
3. Croat Nationalist leaders in Argentina have stated their disapproval of Branco Benzon (c. [redacted]). Benzon receives money from the Argentine Sub-Secretariat of Press and Propaganda to publish the Croatian newspaper Hrvatska, which defends the Argentine "third position" and criticizes the United States. Although Hrvatska is not popularly received throughout the Croatian colony, it tends to disrupt the work of the pro-United States group and is a source of confusion within the colony. Benzon also exerts considerable influence on the Croat priests Vladimiro Bilobrk and Blas Stefanic, both of whom are employed part time by the Argentine Immigration Service. Benzon is alleged to have recently advocated that the Croatian colony in Argentina enter into contact with the Yugoslav Embassy in Buenos Aires in order to support the Tito faction in its conflict with the Soviet Union.

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