

Spruille Braden, Diplomats and Demagogues,
Arlington House, 1971, pg 359

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I had only one brush with Messersmith, but it was prophetic.

It concerned a deal between the Mexican and Brazilian Ministers of Agriculture for the Mexican purchase of some Brazilian bulls. In the Department we had reason to believe the animals might have foot and mouth disease. I expressed to the Mexican Ambassador, and instructed Messersmith to repeat to the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, our concern over Mexico importing diseased bulls. The infection would spread rapidly throughout Mexico and possibly into Texas. If that happened the situation would be extremely serious and might even affect relations between the two countries.

Messersmith took it upon himself to disobey my instructions. With his agreement the bulls were imported. The disease soon appeared in Mexico and was prevented from spreading into Texas only through our government's prompt financial and technical aid in fighting it. It was eventually stamped out in Mexico but not before Messersmith's insubordination had cost the American taxpayers considerably more than one hundred million dollars.

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