Dear Nelson:

I was struck with consternation when I read the morning papers in Mexico City about an hour ago. It seems that yesterday the "Permanent Commission of the Mexican Congress" called on President Avila Camacho in order to express their sympathy in connection with the death of his brother, General Maximino, recently. It seems that the President took this occasion to make certain observations with regard to the Conference recently held in Mexico City and other matters. If what the President is reported to have said is correct, then the President holds ideas, or he is giving expression to ideas, which in some respects are different from anything which he has said to me before or which he has publicly expressed and I have particular reference to what he said or is alleged to have said with regard to the desirability of greater collaboration between the Latin American States.

First of all, in order to keep the picture in perspective, I must give the following background. The Permanent Commission of the Congress is made up of a number of Senators and Representatives. The Mexican Congress is in session annually only from September 1 to December 31. The Permanent Commission under the Mexican Constitution has certain powers in the name of the Congress during the time that the Congress is not in session but the acts of the Permanent Commission and of the President must be ratified when the Congress assembles again. It is no uncommon thing for the Permanent Commission of the Congress to have such a meeting with the President when the Congress is not in session.

"El Nacional" is more or less the Government organ in Mexico City and according to "El Nacional", the President took occasion to make the following observations. I am quoting from the article from "El Nacional".

I. President

The Honorable
Nelson A. Rockefeller,
Assistant Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.
1. President Avila Camacho on expressing his satisfaction over the results of the Conference of Chapultepec indicated that it has brought out certain important problems for all of the countries of Latin America.

2. The President advocated the union of Latin America as a necessity in order to always maintain the independence, the decorum and the progress of its peoples.

3. The President supported the idea that the material and spiritual development and progress, in every sense, of the people of Latin America should be carried on by themselves, and through their own efforts, by a constant and intense labor, and not to depend upon this help on the actuation of other countries.

Later on in the article it states that the President called on the members of the Permanent Commission, as people who oriented public opinion, to inform the people of Mexico over the happy results of the Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace which had just closed.

"Excelsior" has a front page article reporting the remarks of the President and it starts with the following quotation.

We should not fix the hopes for our greatness, nor all of our hopes, in the aid which we may receive from the strong nations. We should work vigorously and effectively in order through our own efforts to build a strong, dignified country. It is an obligation of ours to strengthen each day the ties of friendship and fraternity with the other peoples of the Americas because of existing ties of origin, language and creed. The material, political and spiritual unity of the peoples of all of the Americas, forged in the Conference of Chapultepec, should prove to be the salvation of all of the peoples of Latin America.

If this is an exact quotation of what the President said, it is better than what is above attributed to him in "El Nacional", which is the Government paper.
The article in "Novedades", which is also on the first page, is more along the lines of what the President is quoted as having said in "El Nacional", than what is attributed to him in "Excelsior".

Whatever the President may have said, it will not be helpful either in Mexico or in Latin America generally. You know that in recent despatches and letters, in fact during the last six months, I have been emphasizing the idea that there is developing a growing sentiment in certain quarters throughout Latin America for Latin American unity or Latin unity in contradistinction to inter-American collaboration. I have indicated that there are elements of the extreme right and the extreme left in Mexico and in others of the American Republics which are propagating this idea because of an unfriendly attitude towards us. I have indicated in my despatches and letters also that the Vatican and extreme Catholic elements in Mexico and in other countries of Latin America are propagating this idea with no friendly attitude towards us. There is in my opinion no doubt also that certain British elements and certain Soviet Russian elements are helping to foment this idea.

While I have always known that the President of Mexico, being a Latin, naturally believed very strongly in close collaboration among the Latin American States, he has always emphasized to me the importance of American cooperation as opposed to Latin American collaboration. He has always emphasized to me the importance of Mexico collaborating more closely with the United States than with any other country, and this in her own interest.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that General Cárdenas is very much attached to the idea of Latin American cooperation in contradistinction to inter-American cooperation. He believes that the Latin American States should cooperate as a bloc in order to be able to bring pressures on the United States. When General Enriquez Guzman went to Chile some months ago, he had a commission from General Cárdenas to discuss with Government officials in the countries he visited this idea of closer collaboration among the Latin American Republics. The reports which we have, however, would indicate that General Enriquez Guzman did not carry out this commission in the sense entrusted to him.
The Department has reports, principally one from our Embassy in Haiti, indicating that Mr. Véjar Vázquez, formerly Minister of Education in this present administration and later head of the Postwar Planning Commission, which was dissolved, has been making a trip to various Latin American countries and in Haiti he discussed with Government officials the idea of Latin American collaboration not dominated by the United States. As Véjar Vázquez was making this trip with the authority of the President of Mexico the question arose whether he had a mandate from President Ávila Camacho to carry on such informal discussions. I have discussed this trip of Véjar Vázquez and his statements in Haiti with Dr. Padilla who has assured me that he is confident that Véjar Vázquez had no commission to talk on such a subject in that sense from the President. Day before yesterday, however, I asked the Minister to be good enough to bring to the President's attention the statements which we understood Véjar Vázquez was making in Haiti and I asked the Minister for further information with respect to the trip of Véjar Vázquez.

My own impression is that when the Permanent Commission called on the President yesterday to express their sympathy over his loss through the death of his brother General Maximino, the President took occasion to say something to them with regard to the Conference in Mexico City. I think his remarks were probably not prepared, altogether impromptu and probably he did not consider carefully what the repercussion might be of what he said. What is disturbing, however, is that in such an impromptu statement to the members of the Permanent Commission the President should have made the remarks attributed to him with regard to the necessity of closest collaboration between the "Latin American States". It would indicate at least that either the President believes in this or that he is making the statement under pressures from General Cárdenas and certain elements in Mexico.

It is particularly unfortunate that the President in his alleged remarks should have said that it was a necessity to have this closer collaboration between the Latin American States because of their close identity in "ideas, language and creed". I think his reference to creed is particularly unfortunate but I can see there the influence of Señora Ávila Camacho, who leads a very secluded life and is a very devout Catholic and has, of course,
course, very little knowledge of political things. There is no doubt from recent indications that the influence of Señora Avila Camacho on the President in matters affecting religion is very important.

I would like to believe, and I am still inclined to believe, that the remarks which the President made, or is alleged to have made, do not reflect his real ideas. I believe that he is attached, above all, to the idea of inter-American collaboration and cooperation with the United States but as a Latin he believes in this close spiritual relationship between the Latin American Republics. I would like to believe that his remarks yesterday were impromptu and not adequately considered so far as what their repercussions would be.

The remarks of the President have been reported differently in almost every one of the six morning papers of Mexico City. This would appear to show that there were no prepared remarks and that they were purely impromptu statements. The papers in reporting what the President is alleged to have said have apparently given each their own individual slant to what he is said to have said.

Whatever he may have said, it is bound to have so far as we are concerned unhappy effects. It will add impetus to this idea of Latin American unity, which in my opinion is dangerous, for it is an idea propagated by those who are not our friends either in this Hemisphere or outside of it. It is an impractical idea for it would be dangerous to Latin America. Any impetus in Latin America in Latin American unity as compared with inter-American unity is going to lessen interest in the United States in the close collaboration with Latin America, which is necessary for the whole of this Hemisphere. I think the President has unwittingly given an impetus to this idea because I still think it does not represent his real convictions and thoughts.

The matter is naturally a delicate one and it is difficult for us to say anything but I am going to call on Dr. Padilla this morning and say to him more or less the following.

I shall say that I wish to speak entirely informally. That I have noted with much interest and with a certain amount of
amount of perturbation the remarks attributed to the President during his meeting with the Permanent Commission yesterday. That I have noted that outside of "Excelsior" there are no direct quotations attributed to the President. That the version of what the President said differs in every one of the six papers of this morning. That naturally what the President is alleged to have said with regard to close collaboration between the Latin American Republics interests me very much. I then intend to add that in view of the altogether different versions appearing in the six morning papers and as the President apparently spoke in an impromptu manner, it would be very interesting for me to know, for the information of my Government, just what the President may have actually said.

What I am hoping to accomplish through the foregoing is that some clarifying statement will be issued by the President or by the Foreign Minister today, indicating in view of the varying reports what the President actually said and I am hoping that when the significance of what he may have said is brought to the President's attention he may make a statement which will indicate that he is attached first of all to the idea of inter-American unity rather than of Latin American unity.

In any event, I think it is necessary for me to take up this matter with the Foreign Minister this morning in this informal way as I think he is just as much disturbed about the impression which may be caused as I and we all are.

I have dictated this letter very hurriedly to catch the air mail leaving in an hour and I will be writing further on this matter after I have talked with the Foreign Minister.

In the meantime I do not think we should take the matter too seriously for I still think that it all has reference to impromptu remarks by the President which did not correctly interpret his real basic thought and actuation.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

Enclosure: G. S. Messersmith
Clippings - with original and dup. only.
Further clippings will be forwarded by next air mail.

GSM: NA