From the very outset it was quite obvious that we were being treated with unusual kindness and consideration. The Mexican officials were most courteous and obliging. The large American colony of which I will speak in another memorandum showed a most friendly attitude. It was clear that we would begin our work in Mexico City under friendly circumstances.

I was received by the Foreign Minister and the President in a very few days after our arrival. The conversations were most cordial. It was within two weeks, I believe, after our arrival that President Ávila Camacho, to whom I had taken a liking from the very first time that I saw him after our arrival, indicated that anytime I wished to see him for any lengthy conversation he would be very glad indeed to see me at his home at Los Pinos rather than at his office, which at that time he had in the old Palace on the Zocalo. For some years the Presidents of Mexico had been living at Los Pinos in the Chapultepec Park but carried on their official business in the old Cortes Palace on the Zocalo.

Within I believe three weeks after my arrival in Mexico City, the President and I began to have conversations, usually late in the afternoon or in the evening at Los Pinos. These conversations were always between ourselves and with no one else present. They were carried on in a very friendly and frank atmosphere. I had the feeling that the President felt that I was friendly and sympathetic and understanding. I certainly had the feeling that he was not only friendly, but from the very outset understanding and sympathetic. I was surprised at the frankness with which we could talk. While I had some knowledge of our relations with Mexico and of course of Mexican history, and during the years 1937 to 1940 when I had been in the Department I had some close contact with matters under discussion between the Mexicans and ourselves, I did not really know Mexico as I felt that I should know it. I do not know why, but I had the feeling that I would not be received too sympathetically and that my tasks might be somewhat difficult. This feeling was dispelled in the very outset of our stay in Mexico City. While there
was usually a specific subject to be discussed during these conversations which the President and I had at his home in Los Pinos rather than at the Palace, the conversations usually lasted several hours and took a very general turn. The President is a very intelligent man. While a purely military man, he had had a good deal of experience in politics and was very much interested in the economic development of the country. In addition therefore to certain things concerning which he wished to talk with me or I wished to talk with him, we discussed really all sorts of things and the conversation frequently and almost inevitably turned towards the progress of the war. I noticed from the very outset of our conversations that the President always, when speaking about the war, spoke of "we" and "they" instead of "you" and "they". There was no doubt as to where his sympathies lay in the struggle. In view of the fact that I had been in Germany from 1933 on and then in Austria, the President was very much interested in hearing about Hitler and Goering and the other leaders of the Nazi regime and about what had happened in Germany before the outbreak of the war. He showed that he knew a great deal about what had happened. He was intensely interested in what I could tell him about individuals and about the way things had developed in the European picture. From the very outset it was clear that he had great admiration and respect for President Roosevelt. He looked upon him and Churchill as really the great statesmen and leaders of our time. Although he had not met the President I could note increasingly in our conversations when President Roosevelt's name was mentioned that he spoke of him almost in terms of affection.

It was after my second visit, I believe, to Los Pinos in the late afternoon or evening that the President took me rather shyly into a room adjoining his office. It was quite a large room and the walls were practically covered with maps, showing the theaters of the war. He very modestly and shyly explained to me that although it was difficult for him to do so from the newspapers in the way that he would like to do it, he was following the course of the war from day
to day and he had the location of the principal theaters and of operations and of
the lines set out with pins of different colors on these maps. From time to time
when I called at Los Pinos he took me to this room and we talked about the pro-
gress of the war.

It was so clear where the President's feelings and sympathies were. I
know of course that in the First World War Mexico had been completely neutral.

During the first weeks of my stay in Mexico City I could tell from the attitude of
the press and from so many Mexicans whom I met in all walks of life that their
attitude towards the struggle which was going on was very different from what it
had been in the First World War. Their attitude towards us and their interest in
all we were doing in our tremendous war effort was very real. On the other hand,
one could not help but gather the feeling that there was no desire on the part of
most of the Mexican people to get in any way involved in the struggle. Military
collaboration, however, between Mexico and the United States was already on a
very satisfactory basis. Very friendly relations had been established between
our officers on the border and the Mexican officers on their side of the border.
It was, however, the opinion in informed circles that under no circumstances and
under no provocation would Mexico go into the war through an active declaration
of war.

After several months in Mexico City, I will have to consult my notes to
determine just when this happened, I reached the definite conclusion that if
there should be some provocative act on the part of Germany against Mexico, that
the President would take the necessary steps for a declaration of war. I knew
that President Avila Camacho was not hoping for or expecting such an action on
the part of Germany. He knew, however, how reckless the German Nazi regime was
and that it was capable of anything. I became more and more of the opinion as
the weeks passed that in case there was such a provocative act by Germany, that
the President had made up his mind as to what the attitude of Mexico would be,
and that she would declare war.

I did not write a letter, but the next time that I went to Washington I told the President and Mr. Hull that I felt absolutely sure that if there was a provocative act by Germany that the President would see that Mexico would enter the war on our side. They were of course very pleased to have this opinion, but perhaps they were a little skeptical. They made no reference, however, and did not show any such skepticism. After returning from this trip on which I had informed orally of my opinion, I wrote a letter I believe to Assistant Secretary Phillips or to someone in the Department, perhaps it may have been someone in the Latin American Division of the Department, in which I repeated this opinion. It was a purely personal letter. I recall more than distinctly that I got notes from several friends in the Department saying that I had been pretty lucky about my forecasts as to coming events, but that this time they thought I was wrong. They expressed the opinion that while Mexico would be friendly and helpful during the war, that under no circumstances would she declare war. They told me that they thought I had "stuck my head out" a bit too far this time, and one of them went so far as to suggest that I put something on record in the Department to the contrary of what I had said orally and in these personal letters as to the possible action and probable action of Mexico. I of course paid no attention to these remarks and I was more and more convinced from developing events in Mexico and especially the President's attitude and that of Dr. Padilla, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, that in case of any provocative act there would be a declaration of war.

It was not long thereafter that several Mexican tankers were sunk in the Gulf of Mexico by German submarines. It brought the war close to the Mexican people. It brought the war closer to the Mexican people than anything could have been done. National dignity and pride were affected. The President immediately called, Dr. Padilla, the Minister of Foreign Relations, and instructed him to send
a note to the German government stating that they would have to make adequate 
apologies and reparations without delay, and gave a period of some weeks during 
which a reply would have to come in adequate form or Mexico would declare war. 
There is no doubt that Dr. Ezequiel Padilla, who was then Foreign Minister of 
Mexico, was very happy to receive these instructions from the President and 
proceeded to draft the note. When he handed the note to the President for his 
reading before forwarding it the only change I understand the President made in 
the note was that he shortened the period from about 30 days in which a reply 
would have to be received to I believe 16 days. An examination of the records 
will show the facts.

As soon as it became known to the members of the Cabinet and the other 
high officers of the government that such a note was to be forwarded, great 
pressures were brought upon the President not to take any strong action. The 
President's brother, General Maximino Avila Camacho, who was his older brother 
and to whom the President was much attached, used every possible argument with 
the President to prevail upon him not to send such a strong note. It was certain­
ly not any pro-Nazi feeling or any sympathy with Germany and her allies which 
led the President's brother to take this action. What his motivation was I am 
not able to say. Although the President never made any statement to me to the 
following effect, there is I believe every reason to believe that ex-President 
Lazaro Cardenas used every possible effort with the President to prevent such a 
strong note being sent. The last thing he wished was a declaration of war on the 
part of Mexico. As to the reasons for this attitude on the part of General 
Cardenas, there need be little speculation. I do not know that his sympathies 
were with the Nazi regime. I do know that his feelings against the United States 
were so strong that they would be controlling over every other consideration.

The reasons for General Cardenas' attitude were many. In the first place, he was 
always on the extreme left. Whatever may have been his motivations in connection
with the oil expropriation in 1937 when he was President of Mexico, it was unquestionably anti-American and anti-foreign feelings in general which played a very large part therein. There were of course his ideologic concepts which were basic. General Cardenas had never had any desire for contact with Americans. There is only one American whom I know with whom he had up to the time I came to Mexico any friendly contact whatever and this was Professor Tannebaum of Columbia University, towards whom he showed not only a certain friendship but to whom he also showed a good deal of attention. I do not know now and I did not know then of any ideologic concepts which would have made him pro-German or pro-Nazi in his feelings. The fact is that General Cardenas was always governed by his ideologic concepts and by his prejudices and in this case he had very strong prejudices against the United States in particular. No matter how he felt about the Nazis and the progress of the war and no matter how much he might have felt that an Allied victory was essential in the interests of his own country, Cardenas would have been against a declaration of war and any active participation by Mexico in the war or in the giving of any aid whatever in the conduct of the war. It is one of the peculiarities of General Cardenas that the ultimate good was never his real objective. It was the gaining of his objective which controlled. Although he took the attitude of being a great patriot and a great friend of the people, many of his acts were such as not to help his country or the humble people whom he pretended to be desiring to help so much. I am sure he desired to help the humble but there were other considerations which in his mind were always so much more important than improving their condition. This is a very inadequate analysis and I make it here only in connection with the circumstance that undoubtedly General Cardenas made every possible effort to prevent a declaration of war.

There was a good deal of speculation in the press and among important people in Mexico as to what the answer of the German government would be. There were those who knew that the German government hoped, that is the Nazi regime,
hoped to use Mexico eventually as a base of operations against the United States. They thought the action of the Mexican government in declaring war would be considered by the Nazi government as a blow to its prestige and harmful to it in the rest of Latin America. Mexico would be the first country after Brazil of any importance in Latin America to actually declare war. There was therefore a good deal of feeling that the Nazi government would endeavor to prolong the issue through exchanges of notes and endeavor by all means a natural declaration of war by Mexico. They did not know the Nazi regime. I felt from the outset that there was no question but what the Nazi government would answer the note in such terms as to be unacceptable to Mexico.

The President submitted the matter to the Congress. When adequate action and reparation was not taken by the Nazi government the reaction of a good part of the Mexican population and the overwhelming majority was fully behind the action of the President and the declaration of war was almost unanimously, I do not recall, I will have to look into the records but I believe unanimously approved by the Congress. The press hailed the action as the one thing that Mexico could do. There were undoubtedly those who were not happy about it, but during the years that followed there is no doubt that this Mexican participation in the war proved to be one of the strongest elements to cement the relations between our countries and to put them on a new basis. President Avila Camacho showed himself not only a statesman but a man of great courage when he took this determined and definite stand, and the action of Mexico is another of the bright pages in its history.

The conversations between the President and myself in Los Pinos became increasingly interesting and cordial, if they could be more cordial. The President showed a really intense interest in the developments in the war theaters. They were his daily preoccupation. I recall that when it was under discussion as to whether the invasion of Europe would be through the Balkans or across the
the Mediterranean in France and Italy. The President spoke a good deal about this. He always expressed his opinions with regard to military developments and military strategy in a very humble way. He said that while as a Mexican General he had had a good deal of experience, he had of course had no experience in warfare of the kind that was now going on. In matters involving such global strategy and the movement of such vast forces and in which so many factors of all kinds entered, he did not pretend to advance any opinions. He always spoke with great understanding and feeling of what he knew must be President Roosevelt's problems.

One day he began to express his views with regard to what he thought should be a certain phase of strategy. He advanced his views very modestly. I told him that President Roosevelt, his friend, would be very much interested in hearing his views. He said that he could not possibly express his views as he was not in a position to have opinions which were worth while. I encouraged him to put his views in writing in a letter to the President, which I said I would see would get into his hands. I had a great deal of difficulty in persuading him to do this, but finally he did so and I carried the letter with me the next time I went to Washington, which happened to be soon after I received it from President Avila Camacho, and delivered it to the President. I am not in a position to pass any opinion on the value of the views expressed by General Avila Camacho on this particular piece of strategy. What is important and interesting about the whole matter is that it shows the genuine feeling and interest of President Avila Camacho in the great struggle which was going on and of his desire to make any contribution that he could, not only towards the victory but also to his friend, President Roosevelt. President Roosevelt's comment after reading the letter was that it was very interesting and he said that he would prepare a reply for me to give the President. I carried back this letter and it was a very appreciative note from President Roosevelt to President Avila Camacho, expressing
great appreciation of his interest and of his letter. President Avila Camacho was
greatly pleased.

At sometime in dictating these notes I shall have to make reference to the
very close collaboration which increasingly was established between all branches
of the military in Mexico and in the United States. Important visitors from the
United States increasingly came into Mexico City and high Mexican army officers
were invited into the United States. High Mexican army officers were brought to
the United States and shown every courtesy. Completely aside from the training
programs and the training facilities which were provided to Mexican officers and
the close communication there was, I shall have to make mention in these memoranda
at a later time of the close collaboration which existed between the officers of
our armed forces in Texas and all along the border and the armed forces of Mexico
on the other side of the border. Had it not been for the cordial and understanding
and friendly relations which existed between the high army officers in Mexico
City and in Washington and along the border, there would have been some unhappy
incidents and difficulties which could have caused real trouble. Because of the
climatic conditions in Texas, we used it as a tremendous training field for the
airforce. Because of climatic and other conditions we had large concentrations
of troops in Texas. The winter climate was so mild that it was easier to provide
facilities for large numbers of troops there than in many other areas of the
United States. All these men had to have their relaxations. Being close to the
border they naturally wanted to visit Mexico. Thousands crossed the border
every day from border towns on our side of the Rio Grande to border towns on the
Mexican side. It was war time and these men were seeking relaxation. Through
excessive drinking and indulgence of various kinds it was possible for all sorts
of incidents to arise which could have aroused Mexican feelings. There were all
sorts of possibilities for minor frictions arising between the Mexican and the
American officers along the border. The commanders of our troops in the South
Western area were men of high capacity and understanding. I am thinking parti-
cularly of General Kruger, who was in command in the earlier and more critical
stages. The Mexican officers in command along the border were also men of
capacity. The mayors of many of the Mexican cities showed a good deal of
understanding. I shall always recall the attitude of Mr. Bermudez, who was then
mayor of Chihuahua. He spoke English perfectly and knew our country in many
respects and showed himself very understanding and exercised a good influence
along the whole border. Mexico showed herself an understanding Ally.