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AIR MAIL

TOP SECRET

*Et tu* *Lucas*  
México, D. F., March 16, 1945.

Dear Ed:

I have to refer to my very long top secret letter of March 15, in which I reported on some statements allegedly made by the President of Mexico before members of the Permanent Commission of the Mexican Congress when they called on him at the Palace a few days ago to express sympathy on the occasion of the death of his brother, Don Maximino. In this letter I gave you rather full information with regard to a serious internal situation in Mexico and also referred to the necessity of our dealing with the Minister of Hacienda, Mr. Suárez, in the manner indicated in the letter if he comes to Washington to talk about loans.

You will recall that in this letter I said that Dr. Padilla had immediately after these articles appeared in the papers yesterday morning called on the President of Mexico and made clear to him the unhappy results and repercussions which the publication of such alleged remarks would have. You will recall that the President authorized Dr. Padilla to make a corrective statement, which Dr. Padilla indicated to me yesterday he would make and I so reported in my letter to you of March 15, under reference.

Yesterday afternoon after Dr. Padilla had told me that he was going to make this explanatory and corrective statement of what the President was alleged to have said, I gave serious thought to calling on Dr. Padilla late last evening to suggest the inadvisability of his making such a statement. I realized that if Dr. Padilla made such a statement explaining or correcting anything which the President may or may not have said but which he is reported in the press to have said it would be just the finest opportunity for these extreme right and extreme left elements in Mexico to attack Dr. Padilla most seriously on the ground that he was acting as a mentor of the President and that he was trying to be bigger than the President. Knowing the courage of Dr. Padilla, I

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The Honorable  
Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.,  
Secretary of State,  
Washington, D. C.

realized that in spite of his courage and his willingness to take any responsibility, that the same thought would probably occur to him and that there would be no statement this morning.

In the morning papers there was no statement. Later in the morning Dr. Padilla asked me to come to see him. He said that he had decided not to make a statement and it is interesting that the reasons he gave for not doing so were exactly the ones which I have above set forth. He said that the President had given him full authority to make a corrective statement but that he realized afterwards that the statement would have to come from the President. He realized that if it came from him, that is from Dr. Padilla, he would be subject to the most violent criticism from these extreme right and left elements who are now bringing such strong pressures on the President and who are trying to eliminate Dr. Padilla from the political picture in Mexico and who are keenly anxious to do this before San Francisco.

I told Dr. Padilla that desirable as a statement was to correct the unfortunate impression caused by the President's alleged remarks, I realized that a corrective statement would have to be made by the President himself and not by him and that it was much better to have the President's corrective statement delayed for some days rather than to have Dr. Padilla run the risks of doing so now himself.

Dr. Padilla said that he was going to have another talk with the President this afternoon and explain to him why he had not made the corrective statement as he had been authorized to do and would bring to the President's attention the importance of the President himself at the first appropriate opportunity making a statement correcting the impressions caused by what he had said or allegedly said to the Permanent Commission.

Dr. Padilla said that he had already yesterday told the President about the concern which I had expressed entirely informally over the alleged statements. Dr. Padilla said to the President that I had been particularly disturbed about the statements attributed to the President, that Mexico had been getting on without any foreign help and would have to get on without any foreign help. Dr. Padilla

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said that I had expressed concern that such a remark should be attributed to the President at a time when the President was seeking on behalf of Mexico loans for development purposes in Mexico and which were so important for Mexico. Dr. Padilla also said to the President that I had expressed much concern over the remarks attributed to the President with regard to the necessity for closer collaboration among the Latin American states in contradistinction with collaboration among all the American states. Dr. Padilla said that the President was much concerned over the informal remarks which I had made and that this more than anything else made the President realize what unfortunate repercussions these remarks could have in the United States and in the other American Republics.

I told Dr. Padilla this morning that fortunately the American correspondents here seemed to have failed to catch the significance of these remarks attributed to the President and so far as I knew they had not sent out anything on this matter of any importance to their papers in the United States. I said, of course, however, that the reported remarks of the President would get very wide circulation in Latin America and have wide repercussions unless corrected. Dr. Padilla said these were just the reasons why a corrective statement by the President was necessary. He said that he himself had been quite prepared to make the statement but he realized that to have real effect it would have to come from the President himself. He said that he realized that he, Dr. Padilla, making the statement would only cause the most bitter attacks on him by the same people who were putting these words into the President's mouth and that it might even result in his having to leave the Ministry of Foreign Relations. He was determined not to leave the Ministry to make way for some one who would follow a policy of pressures on us.

Dr. Padilla said that he thought it was highly desirable that I see the President early next week in view of the great confidence and respect which the President had for me and for my views. He said that he thought it would be even more important if I could say when I saw the President that the remarks attributed to the President had caused much concern in my Government and that I had instructions to ask the President to be good enough to give me some information in the premises. Dr. Padilla said that if I could go in my personal capacity and also at the same time state that

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my Government had expressed an interest in these remarks attributed to the President, he was sure that it would carry the day and that it would strengthen the position of the President who was under such serious pressure from all sides.

We have to recognize that the President of Mexico, while he is a very wise and sound man and very friendly to us and while in some ways he is a strong character, he is being subjected to the most extraordinary pressures and all the pressures are coming from those unfriendly to us. These pressures are being brought to bear on him by General Cárdenas and Toledano from the extreme left and by certain extreme right Catholics and altogether selfish financial and industrial interests. Dr. Padilla is practically the only person in the Government who has the courage and the understanding, or at least the courage, to speak frankly with the President so that he stands practically alone. On the other hand, Cárdenas, Suárez, Villaseñor, Toledano and a host of others, who are extremely unfriendly to us, highly nationalistic and in most cases utterly lacking in understanding, are almost every hour of the day bringing pressures on the President to change the policy of collaboration with us, accuse Padilla of selling out Mexico to the United States, etc.

The situation is serious. There is no doubt about that. There are two factors which aggravate it. One is that this presidential campaign is getting started much too soon and these people are determined to eliminate from the Government those who are in favor of collaboration with the United States, whether it is Padilla or any one else. The second factor is that San Francisco is in the offing and these elements of the extreme right and left do not want Padilla to go to San Francisco. The President has already told Padilla that he is to go to San Francisco and I think he will stick by that but if these extreme elements have their way they are going to try to eliminate Padilla from the Foreign Ministry before San Francisco as the only way to get him out of the picture.

We are not interested in who is going to be President of Mexico and whether Padilla has any chance of being President. We are, however, very much interested in a President who is in favor of collaboration, and in Mexico being properly represented at San Francisco and by an understanding personality, such as Padilla, for you know what

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a factor he was in the Mexico City meeting and what a factor he can be in the San Francisco meeting. I shudder to think of how much more difficult our position at San Francisco would be if any other Mexican than Padilla were to head the Mexican delegation there. It is, therefore, not a case of our trying to aid the political fortunes of some one in Mexico but it is a case of trying to support the President of Mexico in maintaining a policy of collaboration with us, which he wants to do, but which he is under such definite pressure to change.

I am, therefore, planning to call on the President early next week. We are very good friends. I know from our three years association that he considers me as a friend. I can talk to him as a friend in the most frank manner and of course without the presence of a third person, which facilitates our talking in a frank way. This direct contact between the President and me here has been of tremendous help in these difficult problems in Mexico because we have been able to talk about things in a way that would be utterly impossible if a third person were present. It is my intention therefore to call on him next week and tell him how much disturbed I am over these remarks which have been attributed to him and ask him as a friend if he can give me any background.

It will, however, be tremendously more helpful in our relationships and to the President himself if I am authorized by you to say that I have brought these alleged remarks of the President to your attention and that you and President Roosevelt are very much concerned and are very much interested to know what the President's real thoughts with regard to these matters of collaboration are and with respect to Latin American unity in contradistinction with Pan American unity. I would therefore very much appreciate your sending me a telegram as soon as possible after the receipt of this letter, simply saying that I am authorized to speak with the President in the sense indicated in this letter. You can depend, I hope, on my discretion to handle the matter most discreetly and correctly. I would merely say that I had brought to your attention and that of the President the remarks attributed to the President, which had caused you both the same concern that they had caused me and that I was authorized to express to him our concern.

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I am making this suggestion because I know it will be very helpful to the President. It will give him a very powerful impulse towards standing up against these people who are pressing him so hard to do all sorts of things which he knows are not wise. The President knows that he needs our support. He knows that he needs the confidence and respect of President Roosevelt and yourself and of our Government. It will therefore be the most powerful thing that we can do to strengthen his position if I am authorized to say this and I know he will welcome it because it will give him a weapon which he needs - not so much a weapon but the confidence which he must feel in himself in combatting these elements who are so desperately struggling to destroy the basis of cooperation and at the same time expecting to get all sorts of things from us through pressures.

A simple telegram to the effect that I am authorized to speak to the President along the line indicated above will be sufficient and I will appreciate it if you can get it to me Monday or Tuesday of next week as I think the sooner I am able to speak with the President the more helpful it will be to him and to us as well as to the best interests of Mexico and both countries.

Obviously these developments indicate all the more strongly why we should deal with Mr. Suárez with respect to loans in the manner I have indicated in my letter of March 15, while Mr. Suárez may be in Washington.

We are in many ways at a turning point in Mexico and the matter is of such profound importance that I cannot overemphasize it. I am sure by handling it the way I have suggested we will be able to keep things on the right path and strengthen the position all around.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

G. S. Messersmith

In duplicate.

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