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Mexico, D. F., April 3, 1946

SECRET AND PERSONAL

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you know, there is in progress in Mexico City the third meeting of the American Republics in the International Labor Office. Before the meeting opened, I got a very carefully worded and very helpful telegram from the Department for my guidance and which I could use in discussions with the government, employer, and labor delegates of our country to the meeting. I assigned to the duty of taking care of everything connected with this meeting so far as this Embassy is concerned, William Ailshie, who is one of the very competent Foreign Service officers assigned to my staff and who is charged with labor and related reporting. He had gone to infinite pains to make arrangements of all kinds for the American delegates and advisers, including their personal comfort.

The delegates were all to be here on Sunday, March 31, as the meeting was to open on April 1. I, therefore, asked Mr. Ailshie to convey to all of the American delegates and advisers an invitation to come to the Embassy on Sunday afternoon, March 31, from 5 o'clock to 7 o'clock when I would give them a background picture on certain aspects of the Mexican situation which might be of interest to them. Senator Chavez did not arrive until about 4 o'clock on the afternoon of

March 31

The Honorable
James F. Byrnes,
Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

March 31 but the invitation was conveyed to him, and he said he would come.

At 5 o'clock on the afternoon of March 31, I think all of our delegates and advisers, some 20, were at the Embassy with the exception of Senator Chavez. As I knew he was in the city and the invitation had been conveyed to him, I waited until 5:30 and gave the people a drink and at 5:30 the Senator having not arrived we got together, and I gave them for a little over an hour a background picture on the situation in Mexico which I thought would be helpful to them during their stay, and every single person indicated to me afterward how unusually helpful they found what I had said.

This is something that I have been doing at the suggestion of the Department whenever we have had a meeting of anything like this in Mexico, and it has always been found to be useful.

I was somewhat surprised that Senator Chavez had not appeared but was informed that the Senator had expressed some feeling that he was not going to take any orders from the State Department. As there was, of course, not the slightest intention on the part of anyone in this Embassy to give him any orders this attitude seemed to be rather difficult to understand. After the meeting, as I know the Senator to be somewhat sensitive and having an inferiority complex, I asked that my regret be expressed that he was not able to get to the meeting but that I hoped to see him very soon and would be very glad to see him at any time.

I should observe in this connection that during the course of the conversation which I had with the Americans here for the meeting, as above indicated, I did not mention the Department's telegram or endeavor to give them any instructions whatever. I knew that the substance of the Department's telegram concerning certain observations on the Argentine delegates had been conveyed to the government, employer, and labor delegates.

Yesterday

Yesterday afternoon, Ailshie came in to see me and said that he had had an unpleasant experience with Senator Chavez which he thought he should tell me about, and I asked him to make me a memorandum which he has done and I append a copy hereto. I think you will wish to read it, and it shows an extraordinary attitude on the part of Senator Chavez.

I have known Senator Chavez for a number of years. He comes to Mexico every once in a while and whenever he has been in Mexico he has come in to see me and we have had some very pleasant chats, and I have always tried to be helpful to him in any way that I could, and whenever the circumstances permitted I have showed him courtesies in my home. On various occasions the Senator has written us from Washington about things in which he was interested, and we have always been most collaborative with him.

Why the Senator should take this attitude with regard to the State Department and should make such unhappy and unwarranted remarks, and altogether unprovoked ones, is difficult to understand, but it must indicate a rather strong feeling that he has with respect to the Department and which, I am sure, is without any foundation. I need not go into detail, but there is no doubt but what the Senator suffers somewhat from an inferiority complex and I think that that is the basis of the whole matter.

An interesting circumstance which I should mention is that, although the Senator did not come to the meeting on Sunday afternoon, he did find it possible to receive some of the Mexico City correspondents at the time the meeting was going on, and he made a statement to them which appeared in the Mexico City newspapers the next morning and which statement was not too happy. According to the newspaper reports of the conversation which the correspondents had with him, the Senator on his own initiative raised the question of discriminations against Mexicans in the United States and indicated that such discriminations did take place. As the Senator knows

a lot

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a lot about Mexico, it is most extraordinary that he himself should have raised this question or should have been willing to talk about discrimination at all and particularly in the terms in which he is said to have done so. If he did it with the intent of currying favor with the Mexicans, he made a great mistake for the Mexicans know what these discriminations are and have understanding of them, and while it is a source of irritation, responsible Mexicans know that our Government and responsible people in our country are not responsible for such discriminations and are taking useful steps to remove them. The Senator really lost stature with the Mexicans if he had any by such a statement as he is alleged to have made.

After all, the Senator seems to be laboring under a very wrong impression concerning his status here. He was sent here as the "government" delegate and as such he was supposed to take in this meeting the attitudes of our Government as might be indicated to him in Washington or here. If he did not feel that he could act as a "government" delegate, he should not have accepted to come in that capacity. His behavior has been most curious, and there may be some reasons for it which I do not know.

I thought you should know about this purely for background but not that any action of any kind has to be taken. I thought that you should also know that this Embassy took all possible pains to show appropriate courtesies to Senator and Mrs. Chavez and that I did not fail in any proper step and that I did not endeavor to give him any instructions. I also wish to make it clear that I have known Ailshie for a number of years, and he is a most correct and helpful officer and always courteous and willing to put himself out to the limit, and there was absolutely no basis whatever for the Senator's unprovoked remarks to him.

Believe me, with all good wishes,

Cordially and sincerely yours,

George S. Messersmith

Enclosure:

Copy of memorandum from Ailshie