


AIR MAIL

1483

Habana, Cuba,
December 8, 1941.

Dear Sumner:

I appreciate very much your cordial letter of December 6th in reply to mine of November 28th with regard to my plans. I knew that you would be understanding of the situation here with respect to my departure, and am very pleased that you agree with the plans which I proposed.

I shall accordingly remain here until the negotiations for the trade agreement and the sugar purchase are completed. This ordinarily could, I think, be completed without much delay, but the instructions which I have just received from the Department for the completion of the negotiations for the trade treaty, and which involve a change in the sugar note, etc., will be somewhat difficult to carry through. The Cubans will be disappointed about the new form of the sugar note to item 501, which we are proposing, but I am hoping that they will be reasonable, which I think they will. The important thing, however, is that I must handle the trade agreement negotiation in such a way as not to interfere with the sugar purchase, and which latter, as the result of developments in the Far East, becomes of even greater importance to us. The attitude of the Cuban negotiators on the sugar purchase was a good deal influenced by the favorable atmosphere created by the sugar note as we had offered it to the Cubans. We are now receding from that position although we are still going very far towards meeting Cuban aspirations. I shall have a somewhat difficult task ahead of me, for in addition to the sugar note, you may probably know, that I am asked also to try to get some concessions on articles which I had hoped we had forgotten and some of which present real difficulties for the Cubans. I shall have to keep before me that the trade agreement and the sugar purchase

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The Honorable
Sumner Welles,
Undersecretary of State,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

are inextricably bound up with each other, but I shall do my best to handle the rather difficult problem.

Unfortunately, the Department's instructions to me, which were dated December 4th and forwarded by air mail, did not reach me until the afternoon of December 7th. I am having my first meeting with Cortina and López Castro tomorrow morning on the basis of the new instructions.

I am hoping that the developments in the Far East may make it possible for us at home to either kill the Fulmer bill in the Senate, or at least to see that it does not emerge as law in any more objectionable form than it now is. I am hoping that as a result of the developments in the Far East the position of the executive Departments with respect to this bill may be strengthened and that it will die.

On the other hand, the nature of my instructions is such that I cannot complete the trade agreement negotiations until we know what will be the legislative position and there is no indication as to when we may know that. It is unfortunate that we cannot complete the sugar purchase, which is now in good shape, without the trade agreement, but the 15 points which are essential in the sugar purchase are included in the trade agreement. These delays are unfortunate both so far as the trade agreement and the sugar purchase are concerned, as we can never tell from one day to another what unfortunate and disturbing factor may arise. So far as the Cubans are concerned, I am sure they would be prepared to go ahead with the sugar purchase immediately on the basis of our last offer if the 15 points were certain - but we can't do this without the trade agreement.

Because of this legislative position, it is therefore not possible for me to tell when we can conclude these arrangements and when I will be able to go home for a few weeks. In accord with your letter, however, my plan will be to go to Washington as soon as the trade agreement is completed and the sugar purchase settled, remain there for a few weeks in Washington to familiarize myself with some of our Mexican problems and then return here to make my farewells, and proceed directly from Habana to Mexico. I am hoping that I will be able to actually get to Mexico City before the end of January.

I understand that the repairs which were ordered in the Embassy residence in Mexico over two years ago as being very essential have not yet been made, due to the continuous residence of Mr. Daniels. I am told that

the condition

the condition of the residence and of the furniture is very bad and that Congressman Rabaut was exceedingly upset about it when he was there on their recent trip through the American Republics. The repairs in the Chancery are in progress and a good part of the Chancery offices are now in the Ambassador's residence since Mr. Daniels left. These repairs on the Chancery may take some six to eight months. Even if the repairs on the residence are started immediately, it will take months to complete them. It looks, therefore, that we shall have to go to a hotel or, preferably, take a suitable house if we can find one, for, since it appears that these repairs to the residence are imperatively necessary, they should be made now rather than for me to try to live in the house for a few months and then move out again. This is a problem which I shall not bother you with, but which I shall take up with Howland Shaw. I know nothing about the residence problem first hand, but I am told that there is general agreement that these extensive repairs must be made before it is again occupied by the Ambassador for residence.

I shall keep you informed as to any development with respect to the trade agreement and sugar purchase which should come to your attention.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith.