

AIR MAIL

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*Handwritten signature: Samuel R. Chism*

México, D.F., México,  
March 22, 1945.

Dear Friend:

I appreciate very much your note of March 17 and I only wish that we had had the opportunity of talking over a number of things while you were in Mexico City. Your duties and mine were such that there was very little time either for some of the personal amenities, or for some of the conversation which I would have, I know, enjoyed so much. I think that in spite of all the effort which some of us put forward we can feel very happy, because the results of the Mexico City meeting have been far more constructive in a broad field than we could even have hoped for.

You know that I am one of those who felt that this meeting was necessary and could not be put off, and I was made more than happy in October and in December of last year when I talked over this meeting with the Secretary and found him so fully understanding of all phases connected with it. The Secretary can have a great deal of satisfaction out of this meeting, because it is no small achievement that this first of his meetings of the American republics should have proved to be in many ways the most significant and important of these meetings that we have held during the last hundred years and more.

It will take some time for some to realize how important this meeting really was and how constructive its results can be if we build on the basis laid here. To me one of the most satisfying things about the meeting is that the other American republics left this meeting with the same sense of having participated in a useful meeting that we did. I have never known an international meeting with which I have had anything to do to start on so good a note and to end on even a better note.

I was

Hayden Raynor, Esquire,  
Special Assistant to the Secretary,  
Department of State,  
Washington, D. C.

I was informed, in confidence, over the telephone yesterday that the Secretary is away for a few days of much deserved rest and I hope that he may really get a rest. I have been under the necessity of writing him several long letters recently, but I hope that he has not been imposed upon with this correspondence during his absence, and Carrigan has told me over the telephone that it has had your helpful attention.

It is good of you to express the hope that we may see each other in Washington in the near future. I have, however, no present intention of going to Washington, for I have a great deal to do here. Confidentially, I have a repair job which I should have done at the Naval Hospital at Bethesda and which I promised Dr. Harper, the head of the Hospital, in December that I would have done immediately after this Mexico City meeting. I have, however, been obliged to put it off on account of the important staff conversations which have been going on between our own Military and the Mexican on questions of military collaboration during and after the war. The conversations started about five days after the Mexico City meeting closed, and I felt I had to stay here for them. These conversations, by the way, have been going most satisfactorily and are being very helpful and constructive. I have about decided that I will put off this repair job at the Naval Hospital for several months longer. There is nothing immediately pressing about it and if it is something I have done in the next six months, it should be quite all right.

I have had in mind that the President and the Secretary may wish me to go to San Francisco, and this has somewhat influenced me in my plans. Whether I go to San Francisco or not depends entirely on the judgment of the President and the Secretary as to whether I would be really needed or particularly useful there. I have confined myself merely to telling the Secretary that if he wants me to go I will be glad to do so and to go in any capacity that he may want me. The only reason that I have mentioned the matter to the Secretary is that under the best circumstances I think the meeting may be somewhat difficult. All meetings require careful preparation and one reason the Mexico City meeting was so successful was because of the careful preparation during several months preceding the meeting. Padilla really deserves a great deal of credit, for he spent several months before the meeting in contact with our friends to the South on various phases of the subjects which would come up, and there was hardly a day during the three months previous to the meeting that we did not have exchanges of views with respect to it.

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It has been my experience that all such meetings require careful preparations and the San Francisco meeting, as you so well know, requires this also, but I have the feeling that a great deal of the work of the San Francisco meeting will have to be done at the meeting itself. There will have to be a lot of persuading, a lot of informing, and a lot of reconciling. Any usefulness that I might have, as I see it, would not be in preparation for the meeting but during the meeting itself where, because of my knowledge of European background and personalities covering so many years, and the same of this hemisphere, I may have a certain usefulness. I am making this reference to the San Francisco meeting, not as an argument for my going, for I myself am entirely neutral in the matter and would only wish to go if the President and Secretary saw that I might be useful.

I also have kept in mind the fact that the President, and I am sure the Secretary, have been thinking in terms of my, in due course, taking a certain post in Europe which would carry with it a good deal of responsibility. I have told them that I am quite prepared to do this if and when the time comes I seem to be the person to do the job. They know I am not seeking the job, but am merely willing to do it if I seem to be, at the time, in their good judgment the one to do it. I think the job is too important for the near and the long range view for any one who has ~~a~~ real sense of responsibility to seek it. I know what the job implies and I would not seek it, but at the same time I have consistently said to the President that I would not refuse it as I felt that in view of my background, which is so necessary in this kind of a job, and in view of the complete harmony of our views, I could not refuse it. So many of my friends and those familiar with these European problems, and their basic importance for our future, seem to take it for granted that I will in due course be going to Europe in this capacity that I would not be keeping faith with myself if I did not express this willingness to do the job if I am asked to do it.

When the President last discussed this matter with me on his own initiative in December, he indicated that several suggestions had been made of things that I could do, which would take me away from Mexico City, but that he felt that it was more important for me to remain in Mexico City for the present. He said there were certain things which I could clear up in Mexico in the meantime before it would be necessary for me to go to Europe. He said further that he felt that it was most important that if I did eventually go to this European post which he had in mind that I would

go without any hampering results growing out of previous criticism or controversy. I told the President that I thought he was completely right in this. I do not know whether my being at San Francisco would have any bearing on that situation one way or another, but it is one of the reasons why I am neutral about going to San Francisco unless the President and the Secretary should want me to go.

Incidentally I am sure you agree with me, that what we do in Europe and the way we do it is going to be one of the decisive factors in determining our own future in the United States. I think it is the most important single issue which we have before us. Ever since 1919 I have followed these European situations so closely and for so long a time have been in intimate contact with every problem in Europe. I feel that a knowledge of the background and of the personalities in this European problem is absolutely essential in the one who will be principally responsible to the President and to the Secretary for the conduct of our policy. It is going to be a job which will take all kinds of courage as well as background. In spite of our policy, and how sound it may be, a great deal will depend upon the man who will be doing the job. That is why the responsibility is so great, and why I am not seeking it but, on the other hand, knowing how important certain background is, I would not be in a position to refuse the responsibility if I were asked to accept it.

My own feeling is that we must be hard and stern and definite in all that we do in this European picture and particularly in the controls over Germany and Central Europe. I will not go into my views on this matter here, because this is already too long a letter, but this is a stern task which we have before us if we have any regard for our future and if we wish to avoid another war. My own feeling is that we should maintain purely military controls for a certain period immediately following the end of the fighting in Germany and Central Europe. I don't like military Governments, but we have seen the ill effects and the problems which arise through too quick transition to civilian control whether it be native or Allied. I am therefore one of those who believe that for a certain minimum period after the end of the fighting, certainly six months and more, the controls in Germany and Central Europe must be purely military. Just exactly how long that period of purely military control would last is difficult to say, but in my opinion it would be a minimum of six months.

It is only after this purely military phase is over that I see Allied civilian controls becoming really effective and desirable. Then the civil authorities of the Allies should



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be in control, with the Military as their arm and instrument. It is in this second phase where I see that I would have such usefulness as I may have eventually in that picture, for our representation will not only have to stand up against the Germans, etc., and have a firm attitude with respect to those who are jointly exercising the controls with us, but it will require a courage and a judgment and an understanding and a firmness which a good many people do not understand. It is because I realize so fully all these implications involved in the task that I am not seeking it, but at the same time I do not shrink from it.

This is a very long letter and I had not intended to write such a long letter, nor to go into matters which I have covered in this fragmentary way. My one excuse for inflicting this long letter on you is that during the short time in which I have had the opportunity of knowing you I have learned to place such a high value on your judgment and capacity. This is the only excuse I can have for permitting myself to think out loud to you in this personal way.

With all good wishes, and hoping that you will call on me at any time I can be of any service whatever to the Secretary and yourself, believe me,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith.