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AIR MAIL

Habana, Cuba, November 8, 1940.

Dear Sumner:

With further reference to my letter of November 7, in which I mentioned the establishment of a new afternoon newspaper here known as "Tiempo", I have to send you herewith a copy of a despatch to the Department in which I give the available information concerning it more fully.

There seems to be no doubt here that Ambassador Martínez Fraga is directly interested in this paper, and Casanova was emphatic that Martínez Fraga had invested 6,000 pesos, the rest of it being put up by Senator Enrique Alonso Pujol. Casanova is fully convinced that the paper has been organized only for purposes of blackmail, and more particularly to work against Decree Law 522.

The chances are that Saladrigas is in on it also, although not with any financial investment. In this connection, I think we cannot ignore a certain combination. Senator Martínez Fraga, Ambassador Martínez Fraga, Saladrigas, and Carlos de la Cruz were very much together during this last stay which Ambassador Martínez Fraga made in Habana, and when the idea of the loan was cooked up. I had been told that Ambassador Martínez Fraga, Saladrigas, and Carlos de la Cruz were meeting each other very frequently, and I recall just before Fraga left for Washington that the three of them, with a fourth whom I believe is the Ambassador's brother, lunched at the Nacional when I was there, and were having an obviously long discussion. It is believed here in more responsible sugar circles that Ambassador Martínez Fraga before his departure for Washington organized this campaign in the press, et cetera, against the Sugar Institute and for the abrogation of 522.

It is quite possible that this new paper "Tiempo" is a part of their campaign against 522.

I had a long talk at the house last evening with one of our most respected and venerable mutual Cuban friends, and when I asked him about Saladrigas he said that he was sorry to say that he felt we could expect little from him. He was a man without

The Honorable
Sumner Welles
Under Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

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backbone, could be expected to do what he was told, and he recalled a transaction several years back in which to his personal knowledge Saladrigas had secured \$125,000. Our friend said that a few days ago someone congratulated Saladrigas on his having secured this important post of Prime Minister with all the power it implied. Saladrigas said to his friend that "this power might lie in the position in other countries, but apparently not in Cuba".

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

Enclosure.

GSM/TMV