

1452
AIR MAIL

Personal

Habana, Cuba,
April 7, 1941.

Dear Breck:

I should have long since answered your very interesting note of February 28th, but I have kept putting it off until I might have the leisure to write, but I am fearful that that moment will not come. The situation here is developing on the whole very satisfactorily. The major things which I was asked to do when I came here have been done, and I can assure you at infinite pains. I have never had to put myself more fully into my work than I have had to do here for I find a good deal undone that should have been done long since. The developing circumstances in the rest of the world have helped somewhat in the solutions so far, but I do believe we have succeeded in getting a better attitude on the part of the Government here. It is a very difficult task to get some of these things done which we want done, and which must be done in the interests of both countries, without giving the appearance of our meddling in internal affairs. That is what makes the task so delicate and one in which, so far, I have been able fortunately to keep off the rocks. It has been very helpful that I have succeeded in establishing some relationships in the right places of a very frank and intimate character. This has made it possible to talk over our problems in really a constructive fashion. In spite of the progress which we have made there is still much to be done.

In matters of defense, the Cubans are prepared to co-operate with us 100 percent. The people here are 95% now pro-American and behind our program. The Communists represent the only real danger here as they seize on all kinds of issues to make trouble and are, of course, 100 percent against us. I do not see how the Communist situation can be handled here without the dissolution of the party, which I hope may be brought about very soon. If we were to take some more definite action at home, it would be very helpful in getting the situation here clarified. I realize our reluctance in passing legislation with regard to strikes, etc., and certainly some form of energetic action will have to be taken. The President has proceeded very wisely in this matter, but I can see us reaching the point of more decisive action, for we will

find

The Honorable Breckinridge Long,
Assistant Secretary of State,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

find that two percent of our workers are seriously delaying our vital defense and aid measures.

I often think of you and I am glad to know that, in some measure at least, the burden which you carried must have been relieved through the recent changes in the Department. I hope that the changes are working out satisfactorily.

The articles in P.M. were brought to my attention and I have read all of them. I have never known any piece of so-called journalism more scurrilous, more inexact, and more intentionally malicious and destructive. There seems to be no doubt that these people are either Communists or are working for completely destructive elements. The attacks on you were so vicious that their very nature destroyed, I believe, any effect they could have had. There was mention of me in several of the articles and completely unfounded statements made. I think there were few of us who escaped. Apparently no one took the articles seriously, but I wish that some one could have done something about it, for people who do this sort of thing should not go unscathed.

It seems to me that the editors and owners of a paper like this carry a very real responsibility for this sort of thing in these times. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people at home in apparently fairly high places who still do not see the situation in its true perspective. There are some of our business people who still think that Germany could win the war and we could go calmly forward and would be in no danger. The attitude of men like Colonel Wood and Silas Strawn is inexplicable. The editorials which are appearing on the first page of "The Nation's Business" over the signature of Merle Thorpe almost amount to treason. The United States Chamber of Commerce is destroying itself, and I am confident that the attitude of the Chamber is only the attitude of a few people who run it. There are some cases like the General Motors which are not giving us any cooperation in our program to get rid of anti-American agents of American firms abroad. This is due to the fact that there are certain people in the General Motors, such as Jim Mooney, and some of the men whom he brought into the organization over the years, who are really betting on a German victory and who hope to be the big boys in our own country if there is a Nazi victory. These fellows are for the most part Irish Catholics who are so blind in their hatred of England that they are prepared to sell out their own country in order to see England down.

The attitude of the Vatican remains very equivocal, and this is very important so far as Latin America is concerned, for the Catholic clergy, as a whole, in these countries are against us.

I have

I have been trying from here to get responsible and important Catholics in our country to do something to assure that the right kind of background and informational material gets to the clergy all through Latin America.

We have a hard pull ahead of us, but I am sure that we will pull through. I often wish that I could be more helpful in the bigger picture, but all I can do is to try to keep things going in my little sphere. It is not impossible that within the next month or so, it may be necessary for me to go home for a few days on some important matters developing here and in that case I look forward to seeing you.

I haven't begun to chat with you as I should like to, but I did want to get this word to you to say that we are struggling along here fairly well. I do hope you are in good health and that the burden is at least somewhat lessened.

With every good wish from Marion and myself to you both,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith.