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Habana, Cuba,  
April 22, 1940.

Dear Hugh:

I think the last letter I had from you was dated February 8th, and I have not yet had any opportunity to acknowledge it. The last weeks in Washington were particularly hectic and I did not leave my desk there until the Saturday preceeding the Wednesday we sailed for Habana. On our arrival here we stayed for several weeks in the Nacional and then found a very comfortable house in Vedado only a few blocks from the Hotel and from the sea. It is in the Cuban style and all on one floor and in every way adequate for our needs. It was formerly the home of President Zayas. Last week I signed the contract for the new Embassy residence here, on the plans of which we have been working for eighteen months and in which my predecessor, Butler Wright, took a very great interest. With good luck the house should be completed within a year and I think it is going to be a very fine house. We shall be able to get a good job, so that I am inclined to think building this residence here will help our buildings program a good deal.

Both my wife and I have been quite well since we came here and the rest is doing us good. Unfortunately she has been having some trouble with her knee which started some months before we left Washington. The doctors say there are several pieces of loose cartilage in the knee joint which have calcified. It has given her a good deal of pain at times and a good deal of inconvenience all the time, but fortunately it seems to be improving. I lost some weight on our arrival here, but I think that is rather normal, and in many ways I am feeling very fit.

I need not tell you with what regret I left my work in Washington and my associations there, and I would infinitely have preferred to stay on there. There are, however, times when we must do what our own good judgment tells us, and when we know more than even the doctors can tell us about ourselves. I would like to think that I have a certain

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special knowledge which can be of use to our Government for a good many years to come, and I am confident that if I had stayed on in Washington, I would have finished myself off very rapidly. I have no false notions about my own value to my Government or to anyone, but I think some of our most serious problems are yet before us, and I believe this interlude here is going to put me in a much better position to face responsibilities in the future.

So far as the job here is concerned, there is enough to do to keep me busy even though the scope of my activities is naturally very much restricted. In many ways, the key to some of our problems in the American Republics is here. If we cannot work out some of these problems satisfactorily here, I do not see how we can do it anywhere. Unfortunately the situation was such that I was plunged right into the midst of things when I came here, and the worst of my task here will be during the first six months. I find it most interesting and I hope that I may be able to accomplish the object of my mission.

Thanks for sending me the clipping from the Herald Tribune. When you see the editor, I hope you will tell him how much I appreciate the only two kind things he said about me.

I saw Bullitt several times while he was in Washington, but he was away from the city a good deal. He did not raise any controversial points, and on most major things we are, as you know, in accord. There are all sort of rumors about his ambitions, but I confess that personally I have no idea what they may be, and I think their realization is very much tied up in whether the President will be reelected. Bullitt is a very capable man and I have very high regard for him.

I think there is growing recognition in our country of the vital interests we have in the outcome of this struggle in Europe. I hope we will see where our enlightened self-interest lies and act accordingly. Your work in Paris, of course, will be much more difficult because we shall have to protest various things which the British and French do, but I think you realize that we have a thorough comprehension in the Government that England and France are fighting for their very existence, and that the things which they do are the very steps which we would take if we were in a similar situation. I think there is mutual understanding and good will and I am confident that these problems will all be worked out with much more understanding than during the period when we were a neutral in the previous Great War.

I am convinced that Hitler over-reached himself when he went into Scandinavia, and that he will not be able to maintain his position there. It may take some time to dislodge him, but

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what there has been of German sea power has been pretty well broken, and they simply cannot get, in the end, adequate reinforcements and supplies from Germany to Scandinavia. The Scandinavian venture too has not helped relations between Moscow and Berlin. I am not one of those who has any doubts as to the ultimate victory of the British and French. When the break-up in Germany comes, it will come quickly.

There is so much that I would like to write that I cannot even begin. This is just a hurried word to tell you that our thoughts are often with you and your Mother, and my wife joins in very good wishes. I need not tell you that my interest in all the problems which have concerned me in the past remains just as keen as ever, and I am continuing to follow them all - political and administrative as closely as possible. I am, of course, keeping out of the administrative problems, but where I can be helpful in any way I shall, of course, be only too happy. If there is any Service or personal problem which occurs to you as one in which I can be helpful, I know you will not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Please tell Murphy that I have his note of February 7th with which he sent me a copy of the Paris Edition of the Herald-Tribune, and that I appreciate his thought of me. Please tell him that I am not acknowledging it directly as I have a good deal before me these days, and you can give him the news of me which I give in this letter.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and sincerely yours,

GEORGE S. MESSERSMITH