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AIRMAIL

Habana, April 12, 1940

Personal and  
Confidential

Dear Sumner:

I want to supplement my letter of April 11 in which I told you about my conversations with Dr. Campa to whom I expressed my concern over reports which were reaching me with respect to some of the work of the Constitutional Assembly.

This morning I saw López Castro at his house and had a most interesting hour with him. I will not go into detail here as I wish to get this word off by the airmail today. He has been over-working and has suffered terribly from his ulcers of the stomach recently and now he has been suffering also from pains in his back. The doctor has told him he is anemic. He undoubtedly has been doing too much and he has frankly told me how much he has been concerned over some of the developments which have been taking place. He plans to take a little rest.

López Castro told me that my concern over some of the work of the Constitutional Assembly was justified. He had done what he could recently and two days ago saw Batista and made it clear to him that if they got the wrong kind of a constitution he would not be able to be President longer than six months. I asked López Castro whether he felt that Batista was really working to get things done in the right way now and he said that he was satisfied that he was. I told López Castro that I was seeing the President very shortly and he advised me not to fail to express to the President

my

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

my perturbation. He said that the President had unusual authority at this time and that he was sure that we could depend upon him entirely to use his complete influence to see that the constitution was one which gave no cause for concern. As for himself, he (López Castro) would see the President and Batista again in the next day or two to speak on the same subject.

While I was at López Castro's house the President sent word he could see me at once if I came to the Palace. I have just returned from there and I said that I was taking the liberty of expressing to him our perturbation over some of the reports which had reached us concerning the nature of the projects before the Constitutional Assembly. The President said that he was very glad that he could assure me that we need have no concern in this matter. They are now assured that the constitution will be a sound and constructive document. He had given special attention to the questions of property and retroactivity and he felt confident they were in order. They had a great majority in the Assembly. He repeated three times during the course of a relatively short conversation that we need have no concern and that he was confident that the constitution would not be a disturbing, but a constructive, element in our relationships.

The President is looking much better as a result of some of the rest he has been taking in the country. I have learned in the very short time that I have been here to have a great respect for him. The President and López Castro are people with whom we do not have to argue and to whom we do not have to give arguments for I think they are as thoroughly understanding of the basic problems as we could expect them to be.

I wanted to send you this reassuring word, and, coming as it does from the President who says that he is keeping in such close touch with the work every day, I feel that it means more than any word I could have from anyone here. I should

mention

mention that López Castro said that he too was encouraged over the results of the last few days work.

We now have word that the Constitutional Assembly will meet on Monday to discuss the giving of legislative powers to the remainder of the Congress. In spite of the delay I believe that this will be done as I think the President made it an absolute condition to his consenting to remaining in office until his duly elected successor comes in. Batista had told me catagorically that they would do this this week but I think he is a good deal hesitant about a lot of things these days and does not feel so sure of his ground. I have reason to believe that he has feared to take all sorts of action in the right direction because of the effect it might have on the elections. I gather that the information that he has recently been given that it would not be any use for him to be President if things are not put on a sounder basis has had its effect. I have some thoughts in this connection which I will give you on another occasion and which I think will interest you.

With every good wish,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

P.S. I do not mean of the foregoing to say  
the battle on the Constitution is won. I do  
believe that the President understands that better  
and what he did if he were not sure  
of his ground.  
Luy