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Subject: Remarkable memory of President Roosevelt.

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In these notes I have at times referred to the extraordinary degree in which I found President Roosevelt informed about events in practically every part of the world and have given some of the reasons why he was able to keep so informed. During the time that I was Ambassador to Mexico, I did not write any letters to the President. I saw him, however, very frequently and always when I went to Washington. There are frequent references in these notes on the conversations with the President while I was in Mexico. The following incident may be of interest in view of the fact that the President was and still is and probably will continue to be a controversial figure in History.

I had been informed that the President wished to see me whenever it was possible for me to leave in the near future for Washington. I knew what the specific subject was on which he wished to discuss. I made the trip north with our Air Attaché, Colonel Champion, in his small Beechcraft. It was wonderful flying weather and I sat in the cockpit with Champion most of the way north. There were many matters which I had been wishing to discuss with the President for several months and I recall taking out an envelope and noting on one side the points which, aside from the matter which I knew he wanted to discuss with me, I wanted to ^{discuss} ~~touch~~ with him, provided the time permitted. I made, I recall, a note of nine points which I wished to discuss briefly with the President and which all had to do with our relations with Mexico. On the other side of the envelope I made a further note of some six or seven matters which I wanted to touch on with the President for my guidance if the President's time permitted.

When I saw the President the conversation started naturally and after the principal subject had been discussed and settled I said that I had a number of things to talk over with him if he had the time.

The President then on his own initiative began to talk of various things in connection with Mexico. It may seem unbelievable but it is a fact that during the course of the conversation which followed, the President on his own initiative covered every one of the nine points which I had noted on the envelope and which I wished to discuss with him. The other six or seven points which I had noted as secondary he did not raise, but I had the opportunity of doing so before the conversation ended. How the President kept so fully informed with regard to developments in Mexico I do not know. Of course, we kept the Department fully informed from the Embassy on every phase of our relationships with Mexico, but the President did not have the time to see these dispatches or reports and on most of the matters which we discussed I doubt very much whether Mr. Hull or Sumner Wells had more than casually mentioned the matters. They were, of course, matters which I from time to time had the opportunity to discuss orally with the President. Mexico was very close and he saw many people from Mexico in Washington. Those who talked with the President about matters covering other parts of the world found him equally well informed.

As many of my good friends at home were extremely critical of the President in almost every respect and, of course, particularly critical of certain internal matters in the United States itself, were also critical of our Foreign Policy, I used to tell several of these friends that they were not as well informed as the President was and that that was perhaps why they were so violent in their criticism and so vituperative in the way they spoke about the President. This remark usually had little effect.

The desire of the President to keep informed of what was happening in our own country and abroad was reflected in the very considerable

number of people whom he saw every day. He in no way held himself aloof except in a few special cases from persons whom he knew were critical of him and what he was doing but for whom he had respect. I recall one morning when I was stationed in either Berlin or in Vienna, we were home for a holiday and my wife and I were having breakfast in the Carlton before taking a train at ten o'clock in the morning for New York, from where we were to sail that day for Europe. As we were eating breakfast, Silas Strawn, of Chicago called me on the telephone. I thought he was calling from Chicago. He told me that he and Mrs. Strawn were just at breakfast at the Mayflower and were returning to Chicago that day. I told him that we were just about finishing breakfast and were leaving at half past ten for New York and later in the day for Europe. Strawn said he wanted very much to see me before I left and suggested that he and Mrs. Strawn come over before we left the hotel for the train. They came over and he immediately went into a diatribe against Roosevelt and all his works. Strawn was a very old friend. I have seen him many times in our own country and in Europe when he and Mrs. Strawn were travelling there. I had great admiration and respect for him. At that time there was a good deal of backstage talk of his being the Republican candidate in the next election for the Presidency. He was a very widely respected lawyer and businessman. He had been President of the National Association of American Lawyers, I forget what the exact title of the association is at this writing, and he had done some excellent work in the few years that he was President of the Association. He was well known all over the country.

I listened to Silas and finally I said, "Silas, last night the President and Mrs. Roosevelt asked Marian and me to have dinner with them. There were only two other people at the dinner. After dinner the President and I had a long conversation while the others were talking in

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another part of the room. The President spoke about you in very high terms. He said, "I wonder why it is that Silas doesn't come to see me any more. I wish that he would come to see me". I thought that this would soften in some respects his feeling with regard to the President. His reaction was strong and immediate to the effect that he would never go and see the President and had no desire to talk with him. By that time we had missed the ten thirty train for New York, so I told him that we would have to take the eleven thirty train in order to get to New York and do a few little things before we went aboard the steamer. He wanted to prolong the conversation. He was extremely angry and upset. He did not like the remarks which I made about the President. I did not wish to break the friendship with Silas for I treasured it as I did so many others, but I told him that I thought he was making a great mistake for, after all, Mr. Roosevelt was the President of the United States and if he wanted to see him or any other distinguished American like himself it was really not only the proper but the necessary thing to see him and to give the President the benefit of his views. It was no use.

I had a very definite feeling that this conversation made a change in the warmth of our friendship but certainly not on my part and certainly not on the part of Mrs. ~~Strawn~~. Silas, I felt, had not forgiven me and could not forgive me for the remarks which I had made about the President and my failing to agree with him in his views with regard to the President.

Whatever President Roosevelt's failings may have been and great men all have their shortcomings, as I have found not only in associations in my own country but in others, the President had a greater breadth of vision and a greater understanding of events than did some of my good friends who were so extremely critical of him and who could see no good in the President. While no President of our country was ever better known and appreciated, I think, the world over, there was certainly no President we have ever had who was so cordially hated and detested by some very worthwhile people in our country.

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