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Habana, Cuba, June 22, 1940.

Personal and Confidential.

Dear friend Barton:

Your speech the other day was splendid and characteristic of you. I am sending you herewith a clipping from El Avance of June 18, one of the principal papers published in Habana, in which there is appreciative comment on your speech which I think you will be interested in seeing. The newspapers in Habana are surprisingly good. All of them with the exception of the Communist Hoy and the German-owned and controlled Discusión are very friendly to us, completely behind inter-American cooperation and this includes several of the most important newspapers here which are owned by a man who is decidedly pro-Falange in his sympathies. We can, I think I can assure you, depend on Cuba for the most complete and thoroughgoing cooperation in any inter-American program and to be with us under all circumstances.

Ever since 1933 when the Hitler Government came into power I have been telling my friends what a menace this Government in Germany was not only to Germany in the long run but to the smaller and to the larger States in Europe. I made it clear that what Germany was after was not only political and economic domination of Europe but political and economic domination of the world. I was laughed out of Qurt. As a matter of fact I was in no sense a prophet, or trying to be one. I was only indicating what was plainly the fact and what the highest leaders of the Nazi Party did not hesitate to say to me were their objectives.

The Monroe Doctrine always has been a thing which made the present Government in Germany see red. I have

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The Honorable
Bruce Barton,
House of Representatives,
Washington.

Barton, Bruce

had as early as 1934 some of the most important people in the present German Government say to me that the Western Hemisphere from Mexico down was just as much a natural field for German political and economic expansion as was South-Eastern Europe. They made no concealment that after they had succeeded, as they said, in destroying England and France, we were the real obstacle in their way.

What is so extraordinary and what I cannot explain to myself is that some very intelligent people who have been isolationists at home do not realize that it only takes one country to make a war. It takes two to make a peace, but it only takes one to make a war. I have always tried to point out to my friends that the way things were working out in the world and with the objectives of the totalitarian powers in Europe and in the Far East, an isolationist attitude was purely a dream and utterly unrealistic. Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and even England and France wished nothing more than to be let alone. They had no more desire to go to war than we did. Each one of them thought that in some way or other they could be immune and that what would happen to their neighbor would not happen to them. Common action therefore could not be secured in spite of the handwriting so largely written on the wall. This of course was Germany's technique and you know how successful it has been - assurances to one country while she was destroying the sovereignty of another. Now that her arms seem to be in control in Continental Europe and she is preparing the attack on the last bulwark of our first line of defence in Europe - England - she solemnly assures us that she has no ambitions in the Western Hemisphere. These assurances mean just as much as the assurances which were given to the other countries in Europe, and no more.

I recall that when I was Minister in Austria the German Government was constantly giving the most solemn assurances to the Austrian Government that it wished nothing more than to maintain the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of Austria. All that it wished was that the National-Socialist Party should be permitted to function in Austria just as other parties. In the end the Trojan Horse was permitted to come in and we know the result. After the occupation of Austria the same solemn assurances were given by the German Government to Czechoslovakia and we know what happened there. It is useless to go

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into this because the technique has been repeated in the case of so many countries. I am mentioning this because it is inexplicable to me that there are people at home who still believe that any faith can be placed in the statements of the German Government that it has no aspirations in this Hemisphere. Why the thousands of German agents in the United States? Why the activities of German agents in Cuba and in every country in South America? Why the attempts to secure army and navy plans and secrets in the United States? A country does not find these things necessary unless it has very definite objectives in mind.

It was not possible to get the union of the European States against Germany because each one hoped to find immunity itself no matter what happened to its neighbor. Now we have in our own country exactly the same attitude among some. They feel that in some way or other we shall be immune. Thank God that there is now almost general recognition that we cannot make the same mistake that has been made by others. So far as Germany is concerned she has considered us as her strongest and most potential enemy since the beginning of 1933 when the present German Government came into power. The will to peace will no more keep us at peace than it kept the countries of Europe at peace who have now lost their sovereignty.

It is a dreadful thing that as the result of these events we are under the necessity of turning all our productive capacity and our resources to the defence of ourselves and of this Hemisphere. If there is any will in the United States to maintain our institutions and our sovereignty we have got to recognize that the threat is immediate and definite and that nothing is more real than that threat. If we go ahead as we are doing now and bend all of our energies in the direction we are, I am sure that we and this Continent will be safe and that eventually the world may be rid of this scourge which is afflicting it and which would bring back a return of the Middle Ages. The expression of a return of the Dark Ages like to many others does not seem real to so many people in our country. I happen to know what it means and what the destruction of all civil and political rights means. That is why I think in our own country we must be prepared to

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restrict our own civil liberties for a while in order that we may preserve them for ourselves as a whole in the long run. It will be necessary for us to put down moral sabotage in every possible form in which it raises itself in our country and in the American Republics, and you and I well know that it can raise itself in a hundred insidious forms. There are men in our country who are potentially just as dangerous and who would sell us out as those who we know were prepared to sell out their countries in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and even in France and England. In a democracy, after all, it is the majority which must rule and I am confident that in the United States 98 percent of our people want to maintain our present institutions. It may in ordinary times be a sign of strength for a country to permit a small minority of less than, say, 2 percent to use license of speech under the cloak of freedom of speech. A restriction in the civil liberties of our people will not affect 98 percent of our population and will only affect the 2 percent which is using license as a means of endeavoring to destroy the civil liberties of us all.

In times like these there are measures which must be taken and which must be taken in time. Experience in the last year has certainly taught us that. That is why I believe we ought to proceed in a ruthless fashion to put down any alien activities in our country which are in any measure subversive or critical. That is why I believe we must apply these measures to native and naturalized citizens who would under the guise of the maintenance of civil liberties undermine the foundations of our Government. In my opinion a man like Nye who has asked for the impeachment of the President should be removed from his seat in the Congress and to me it makes no difference whether he is malicious or just ignorant and uninformed. He is just as dangerous whatever may be the springs of action.

Our first line of defence which was in the democratic States in Europe is crumbling. Our second line of defence is in Greenland, Iceland, Alaska and Canada and in all the countries of this Hemisphere from Mexico down. We cannot permit the second line of defence to crumble as we have permitted the first to disintegrate. This means not only measures for physical defence but it means active measures to stop moral sabotage in our own country and in everyone of the American Republics.

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These Republics as a unit I think wish to cooperate with us, but of themselves they are helpless. It is just as much to our interest to bolster up their defence physically and morally as it was to France to bolster Belgium and for England to bolster France. These American Republics are relatively weaker in many respects than the countries in Europe which already have lost their sovereignty. They are willing to follow our leadership but we must give the leadership. It is no use, for instance, for me to talk to the Cuban Government about the Communist newspaper here as long as we permit The Daily Worker to appear in New York or the New Yorker Staatszeitung und Herold which is insidiously undermining the situation among the better German-Americans in our country. It is no use for me to talk to the Cuban Government about the activities of the Communist Party here or its dissolution as long as we do not take any action in the United States to dissolve the Communist Party. We have ample evidence that this man Browder got a passport under another name several years ago to go to Russia to get his orders there. And yet we permit the Communist Party to exist as a legal party in the United States and to have as its candidate for the Presidency on the same ballot as the Republican and Democratic candidates this same man who, with his party, is the servant of another Government. There are many ways in which we must give leadership to the Latin-American States and this is not only in the field of physical, but of moral defence. I am hopeful that the next meeting of Foreign Ministers of American States which is to take place at Habana very soon will arrive at these necessary conclusions and that they will be translated into action. The sooner we dissolve the Communist Party in the United States the better it will be not only for us but for all of the Americas.

The German Legation has a tremendous staff in Washington and the Japanese establishment is similarly large beyond all proportions. We have got to take the necessary steps in the United States in order to see that these foreign missions are reduced in personnel to the proper needs for the business they can properly transact under international practice as we conceive it. If we will do this, then we will see everyone of the American States following our lead. If we will not do it, we must have a good deal of sympathy with the Uruguayan Government which now has the problem of determining how to deal with members of the German diplomatic mission who have been engaged in subversive activities. I am confident that we must take the lead

if we expect our Latin friends to act as they should.

This already is much too long a letter but I could not resist the temptation to chat with you and to steal this time out of a busy morning. Your attitude has been magnificent and your understanding clear. Men like you are a tower of strength these days. I myself am not in politics and have never been and I realize the exigencies of political life. There are, however, moments in the history of a country when individuals and parties must be forgotten and when there is only one thing which can be considered and that is the national interest for which we are prepared to give our all. If we are not prepared to make sacrifices and to fight for what we wish to conserve then we do not deserve what we have. I am rather fearful that the good things which life has brought us and that some of the benefits which the civilization we wish to conserve has brought us, may not have made us a little spineless. In any event, I wanted to tell you that I often think of you and am among those many in our country who appreciate the really admirable, constructive and helpful attitude which you have consistently taken.

My wife joins in very good wishes to you and Mrs. Barton.

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith.

GSM/hp