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December 23, 1938.

Personal and confidential

Dear Judge:

I really feel awful about not having written you as I said I would, but I kept putting it off from day to day for a real opportunity to write you at some length. It seems to me that instead of things getting easier here for some of us, they are getting more difficult, and it has simply been impossible for me to get to any personal correspondence. I am leaving today for Wilmington to stay there until Monday. I am not at all sure that I may not have to come back. In any event, I am not going to be away from here more than a few days.

Since you have gone things have not gotten any better in Europe or in the Far East and, as you know, the Secretary has been having his own troubles at Lima, due to the attitude of the Argentines. I do not think that the attitude of the Argentines is influenced directly by German or Italian sources or propaganda. It is the old story of the Argentine wishing to take leadership and of her jealousy of us and of Brazil. Fundamentally, I think the Argentine is after all interested in the things that we are interested in but she feels herself closer to Europe than any of the other American Republics and she does not wish to make any gesture at this time which might upset Italy, and perhaps even Germany. This does not mean that she is in any way in the fascist or nazi camps or influenced by what is happening in those countries. It is simply that she wants to maintain her ties in Europe both for political and economic reasons.

Then

The Honorable
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The Republics, Sam D.

Then, of course, there is the basic factor that she feels we are taking too great a position of leadership and this does not make them happy. Nevertheless, the attitude which the Argentine has taken at Lima is bound to be upsetting when major interests are at stake. Just how the thing will turn out at Lima, I am unable to say, but I am inclined to think that there will have to be firm attitude by the other 20 republics even though the Argentine determines to stand by. Every effort, I think, will be made today to find some formula which can make the declaration of the Lima meeting on solidarity unanimous. My own feeling, however, is that it is far better to have a majority declaration that is sufficiently strong than a completely watered down one just to satisfy the Argentine. On the other hand, I think it would be unwise that there should be any recrimination and too great criticism of the Argentine at this time as this can only make the situation worse. Our newspapers are handling the situation very well.

So far as the recent developments with Germany are concerned, I need not tell you, I am sure, that they are not our making. The German Chargé came to see Welles to lodge a protest against the Ickes speech. Welles very properly told him that he could not receive such a protest. You have seen the record of the conversation in the papers and it is substantially correct. What the papers do not say and what I can confidentially tell you is that Welles told the German Chargé at the end of the conversation that if the German Government gave publicity to the fact that it had endeavored to lodge a protest, then he, Welles, would have to tell the press what he said. The whole responsibility, therefore, for what has appeared falls on Germany.

The German papers now speak of a break in relations as being in the offing. As the men who are in control there are in so many ways irresponsible, one cannot foretell what they will do and they may break off relations with us. If a break comes, it will be entirely due to their action and not to us. I doubt whether there will be any break in relations because if there is it will mean more disadvantages to them than it does to us. It is this last factor which will probably influence them in not giving way to their feelings and passions and not break off relations abruptly. It is, however, a contingency which we have

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to reckon with and I shall be spending the rest of the day today in mapping out the steps which we shall have to take in case a break of relations comes. It will make very little difference so far as we are concerned, for I think our action would be limited to taking away the Charge d'Affaires and our consular officers would, of course, be able to continue to remain.

I think the country will overwhelmingly approve of the stand taken by the Department and the President. It was the only thing we could do. When the Germans tell us that we must apologize because our papers speak the truth and when they begin to endeavor to dictate to us in this fashion, there is only one attitude we can take. The articles which recently have appeared in the German press with regard to the President and Mrs. Roosevelt and with regard to Mr. Hull and others are incredibly vile. It was, therefore, with very poor grace, as Welles put it, that Germany should make any protest over the relatively mild things that Ickes said the other day. These mad men in Germany are so drunk with the power which they have within the country that they really feel that they can dictate to the outside world in the same way.

Although I have not written to you, I have thought of you many times every day and have envied you the sunshine and the leisure which I hope you have been enjoying. I am sure the rest has been doing you a great deal of good and I think we must all take it a little bit easier after your return to Washington.

My wife joins me in love and good wishes to you and Mrs. McReynolds and I hope that you are having a very happy Christmas and that the New Year may bring us all a greater measure of good things.

Always faithfully yours,