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AIR MAIL.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Mexico, September 17, 1942.

Dear Sumner:

As you know, General Embick and Admiral Johnson arrived here last Sunday, together with the Mexican members of the Joint Mexican-United States Defense Commission. I had a long talk with them on Monday morning and gave them the picture of the situation here. On Monday evening I gave a supper in the Embassy at which there were some 300 guests. Those invited were, for the most part, high ranking Mexican Army and Navy officials and their families, and of course the members of the Commission and the members of the Mexican Cabinet. It proved to be a very helpful affair and everybody came with the exception of General Cárdenas, who sent me a letter that he was not able to come because of the pressure of his work. He sent me several messages expressing his regret that he could not come. The newspaper boys here wanted to say something about his not being there, but I think I was able to make them understand that this would be a great mistake. General Cárdenas does not attend social affairs and never has, and while this was really in the nature of an official reception, I can quite understand why he did not come and I do not think that it has any significance whatever nor that any should be read into it.

Tomorrow evening (Friday) I am giving a small dinner in the Embassy. There will be under thirty guests and the President has been good enough to say he will come. As he practically never goes out for dinner and I have not known him to go out to dinner in an Embassy here in this way since I am here, I think this will be sufficient indication of the interest which the President takes in the Commission. General Cárdenas and the Under Secretary of National Defense, General Salvador Sánchez, Chief of the Presidential Staff, and the higher officers of the Mexican Army having to do with the Commission, will come, as well as Dr. Padilla. This small, intimate dinner will give the President and General Cárdenas and these ranking

officers

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

officers of the Mexican Government opportunity to talk with General Embick and Admiral Johnson. I have a very cordial note from General Cárdenas saying that he will come to the dinner. I think his coming to this dinner should allay any of this irresponsible talk that he is avoiding the Commission, etc. I think it will probably be the first time that General Cárdenas has gone to a dinner of this kind for many years and it is a great step forward.

There is a meeting of the Commission this evening, which is probably now in progress, and I understand that the President, Dr. Padilla and General Cárdenas will be present at this meeting.

General Embick has not been well since he came and I understand was really not well before he left Washington, but insisted on making the trip. He is feeling much better. He was not able to be present at the parade yesterday on Independence Day, but Admiral Johnson was with the President all the time during the review.

I will be writing the Department with regard to this review and parade, because it is really worthy of note, but I just want to tell you that it was the finest military spectacle which has been staged in Mexico. The parade was purposely kept short but at that it lasted about 2-1/2 hours. It was organized by General Salvador Sánchez, the Chief of the Presidential Staff, and by General Abelardo Rodríguez. They did really a splendid job and that they were able to do what they showed yesterday is proof of the advance which Mexico has made. There was perfect discipline, impeccable marching and absolute order in the parade. I said to the President and to General Sánchez after the parade that it was as well organized a parade and as fine a show of military discipline and organization as one could find anywhere, and I was not exaggerating.

During the parade they showed all of the motorized material and eqipment which we have sent them and used the planes which we have sent them. One could tell how proud the officers and men were of this equipment and there was every evidence that the Mexicans had known how to organize and use it. I think if there has been any doubt as to the justification of our sending even the small quantities of material we have sent here, yesterday's show was ample justification. An army needs tools and without tools it cannot work nor have spirit, and yesterday they showed that they could use the material and had the right spirit.

After

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After the parade, when General Salvador Sánchez came up to report to the President, I congratulated him on the fine showing of the men and the well organized parade, and he put his hand on my shoulder and said: "My friend, we could not have done this if it had not been for the help of you all." As our Mexican friends are not very voluble in their expressions, this coming from General Sánchez means a great deal, and the material which the Mexican Army could show made a tremendous impression not only on the Mexican people, but on some of the Army officers who have been skeptical and critical.

General Embick and Admiral Johnson were, I think, very much surprised at the fine, orderly show the Mexicans put up. They did not expect anything of the kind. I think all this would not have been possible if it had not been for the new spirit which so largely prevails here since the President came into office here, and there is no doubt that the Mexicans are becoming more alive to the war and more desirous of doing their part every day.

Padilla and I made a broadcast last evening to the United States over the NBC hookup, and he made really a splendid and stirring address. While we were chatting Padilla said that Mexico was only awaiting her opportunity to take her part in the front line with our troops, and he hoped that the way in which they had handled the material which we had given them had shown us how desirable it was and how much it helped them in their effort.

This is just a brief word that I wanted you to have, as I knew it would interest you.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

G. S. Messersmith.

GSM:HH