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C. M.  
C. M. Ford H.

December 12, 1950.

Dear Al:

It was thoughtful of you to write me on November 30 in reply to my note. I can quite appreciate that in some respects you would prefer to continue as the U. S. Representative on the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, but in some ways I think you will enjoy the new job more as there are some very concrete problems to put one's teeth into and I think that is in some ways always more satisfying. I certainly hope that you will be able to make a trip around to the countries in the area, for well as you know them, there are always new personalities in the picture and new situations, and with the background and knowledge that you have such a trip would be of tremendous help to you and to the Department. As to the headaches, there are those everywhere these days.

This country is going along very well and in case there is trouble I believe that it will respond better than it ever has before. You will recall that during the First World War Mexico was a sullen neutral and gave us a good deal of preoccupation. In the Second World War she collaborated with us, in my opinion, as fully as any of the other American republics and did it in a very wholehearted way in the economic and political field, and in the military field as far as we wanted her to. She would have been willing to do more in the military field. In case we become involved in general war I believe that Mexico will respond in all three fields as fully and more so, and at least more effectively, than any of the other Latin republics.

I do not give you my views on the broad picture, for that would take too much of your time, and I limit myself to saying that I consider general war almost inevitable. Western Europe, led by England, is governed by its fears rather than by understanding and wisdom. There is, I believe, in Western Europe, through the events of the last weeks, a greater awakening to the danger, but there is not yet the will to do the necessary because their fears are still predominant. So far as we are concerned I believe that general mobilization, which seems to be in the offing, is inevitable and desirable. The only real question is whether the Soviet is ready to risk general war now or whether she thinks that time is still working in her favor. Two and a half years ago I was of the opinion that we should strike while we had superior force and could deliver it and avoid the major catastrophe of general war by confining it to the air over Soviet territory. At that time we could have destroyed Soviet power within Soviet territory without risk of serious retaliation from land or air or sea. Just as during the

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years 1934 to 1937 we let our fears control us and let Germany become strong, so today we have let time pass and now a general war will mean things that none of us can foresee. I am still of the opinion that we are in a better position to win the war if it comes now than we will be if it comes a year or two later. It is the gravest mistake in the world to believe that we can expect any change in Soviet objectives or in holding by them to any agreement which they or those controlled by them may make.

It was not my plan to go north before late January or early February, but if general mobilization comes along it may be necessary for me to make a trip to New York and Washington and perhaps to Toronto sometime earlier. The whole economy of Mexico depends upon the situation in the central area of the country which is so highly industrialized now, and the maintenance of the Mexican economy depends upon adequate electric power, and as you know we produce almost all and distribute all the electrical energy in this important part of Mexico. We are engaged in a big program of works which is absolutely essential to maintain the economy of the country and we have ordered almost all of the equipment for the program in the United States and all of it is under production and some of it, and perhaps most of it, is 50 percent or more completed. On the delivery of this equipment depends the maintenance of the Mexican economy and her capacity to be less of a drain on us in case of general war, as well as her capacity to produce the things that we are now getting and will want in greater volume in case general war comes. We are already making heavier demands on her industrial and mining production, as we did in the last war. It is important for us for political as well as for economic considerations that Mexico should not only not be a drain on us, but be able to produce the things we want, and that means political stability as well.

As a result of general mobilization there will be drastic steps which are as necessary as inevitable. It is difficult to maintain wisdom and poise and perspective in times like these and there are often a lot of new people who necessarily come into the picture who can take steps which are not wise and which destroy the very things which we are after. There will necessarily be limitation of exports and diversion of essential production to first purposes. It will be difficult for some people to realize, especially those who may be new from industry and commerce in government, how necessary it is for us to maintain the economy of a country like Mexico if she is to be of the political, economic and military support to us that we want. Personally I feel that there will be adequate interest for letting the equipment which we have ordered for these new plants to go forward to us when completed instead of being diverted elsewhere, for without it Mexico simply cannot perform what we expect her to perform. People in the Department like you and Mann

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and Ribottom and Ruth Hughes understand this sort of thing, so that all that I have said in this preceding comment is nothing new for you. I would say that in general the electrical equipment which is in production in the United States for Mexico and Brazil should go forward on schedule. I do not know the programs in the other countries of Latin America well enough to know how much it applies to them.

I am delighted to know that you and Lolita will be able to spend the holidays in Havana. I look forward to seeing you here sometime and in any event hope that I may see you in Washington early next year.

If you think the comment which I have made in the last part of this letter concerning Mexico would have any particular interest for Tom Mann I would be glad to have you show it to him. I am sure that you both will enjoy working together.

With all good wishes to you and the family from us both,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

G. S. Messersmith