

1417
AIR MAIL

Habana, Cuba, November 14, 1940.

Dear Sumner:

In my letter to you of November 7 I mentioned that it had been reported that Pepin Rivero had bought La Prensa in New York, but that I had not had an opportunity to verify this directly through Rivero. I am sending you herewith a copy of a despatch which I am sending to the Department, which I believe you will find interesting (No. 1096), and you may wish to have someone follow this, although of course I shall be able to keep in touch with the developments here very closely, and perhaps on the whole can follow the developments more easily here than we could in New York.

It is my personal conviction that Pepin Rivero has made his decision as to where he stands, difficult as it was to make for him. I believe he is going to support close cooperation with us, inter-American cooperation, and will not support interference from Spain. I think he realizes the futility of the present program of the Spanish Government, and the futility of any idea of Spain exercising any control over any part of this hemisphere. On the other hand, he has these close connections with the Falange here, and the Spanish element looks up to him as its principal support and for certain guidance. I do not believe that he himself is really active in the Falange, and he may even exercise a good influence at this time through his connection with it.

For your information, however, I can tell you that coincident with the arrival here yesterday of the new Spanish Consul General, Rivero had reserved through an intermediary a suite at the National Hotel for his use. It was made clear, however, that his name was not to appear on the register. The suite was to be only for the purpose of entertaining guests, and very specific arrangements were made that only telephone calls directed in a certain way were to be

put

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

put through to these rooms. My informant, who is in a position to know the exact details with regard to the arrangements for the suite, seemed to place some significance upon the suite being rented the same day that the new Spanish Consul General arrived, and he seemed to think that it may have some connection with Falange activities. I am reserving judgment on the whole matter, as I shall get in due course accurate information as to the use the rooms are put to. My own opinion is that Rivero would not lend himself to any activities by the Spanish Consul General, but we will see.

I have just learned that the hotel phone for the consul is a private phone installed.

This new Spanish Consul General, by the way, was obliged to leave Mexico some time ago for improper activities objectionable to the Mexican Government, and when previously here in Cuba he was believed to be plotting against the Government. It was announced in Spain, when this man's appointment was made known, that he was also the head of the Falange in Cuba and of the Auxilio Social, and that he was carrying a sword from General Franco from the Falange in Spain. Just before the new Consul General landed in Cuba Batista made a statement to the press that he knew nothing about such a sword and that he was sure that the Falange, with an ideology so different from his, would not think of giving him a sword. The Cuban Government has not yet recognized this new Spanish Consul General, and I think they are in very much of a quandary.

It is of course an extraordinary situation when the Falange and Auxilio Social in Spain send someone in Spain to go to Cuba as the head of the Falange and Auxilio Social in Cuba. The announcement to this effect was made in the Spanish newspapers, and of course repeated here. At the same time, the Spanish Government names this man as Spanish Consul General. If, under the circumstances, the Cubans receive him, they are creating a precedent, and there is no reason why the German Minister here should not, under these circumstances, be openly the head of a Nazi organization here, et cetera. Cortina is lunching with me at noon today, and I will mention the matter to him to see what his reactions are.

You

You will recall that I have in my letters and despatches been bringing attention to the close association here between the German, Italian, and Japanese Ministers, and certain chiefs of mission of the American Republics, principally the Argentine, Chilean, and Peruvian. I am sending you herewith a copy of a despatch, dated November 15, with regard to the Peruvian Minister here, which I think you will find interesting and significant, as the information comes to us through the Naval Attaché from a source which has heretofore given us information we have found to be reliable in every respect.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

Enclosures.

GSM/mw