

AIR MAIL

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Confidential

Habana, Cuba,
Nov. 6, 1941.

Dear Sumner:

In a conversation which I had with Dr. Cortina last evening, on other matters, he mentioned a long letter which he had received from the Cuban Chargé in Madrid. You will recall that the Cuban Chargé there is a very junior officer in the Cuban Foreign Service, but Dr. Cortina says that he is behaving with much tact and with real judgment. He read to me a part of the Chargé's letter which he considered very interesting.

The Cuban Chargé said that he had had a conversation with Señor Sandoval who, I understood he said, was the Chief of Cabinet of the Foreign Ministry. Señor Sandoval said that it would be interesting for the Spanish Government to know what attitude the Cuban Government would take if the United States entered the war against the Axis powers. Señor Sandoval said that the Spanish Government desired to remain neutral. If, however, the United States should enter the war against the Axis powers, or one of them, Spain would almost inevitably be required to take a belligerent attitude as "her interests would be touched". He referred to these interests as being the Canary Islands and Northern Africa. Our being a belligerent would almost certainly involve "Spanish interests". Señor Sandoval left the impression with the Cuban Chargé that if we entered the war they would have to do so. He repeated the observation that it would be helpful for the Spanish Government to know the Cuban attitude.

The Cuban Chargé in his letter said that he had replied to Señor Sandoval to the effect that he had no official information from his Government as to what its attitude would be, but that he felt confident that the policy of his Government was so thoroughly identical with that of the United States that there would be no question that if we entered the war in any way, Cuba would, within a few days, take whatever action we had taken. While this was purely a personal observation,

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he had no doubt as to what the attitude of his Government would be and he did not see how there could be any doubt on this point on the part of the Spanish Government.

The Chargé, after reciting this conversation between him and Señor Sandoval, observed in his letter to Dr. Cortina that he had the impression that Señor Sandoval was much concerned over the course of events and was trying to bring some measure of intimidation to bear on the Cuban Government to remain neutral. Dr. Cortina, after showing me these parts of the letter, remarked that he thought the comment would be interesting to my Government, and he merely wished to add that although their Chargé in Spain might be a junior officer in their Foreign Service, he was showing a good deal of judgment and had a very correct understanding of the attitude of the Cuban Government.

I am merely sending the foregoing to you for such interest as it may have in the Department's pattern of the Spanish position.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith.