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Habana, Cuba

THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Hab.  
10/29/53  
HRW, JY

Habana, October 20, 1953

Hab.

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Harvey:

I was waiting to reply to your letter until I felt I had something definite to tell you.

As you I am sure know by this time, I presented my credentials Friday morning at eleven o'clock. From all outward appearances, everything was thoroughly successful, and the General was kind enough to add several personal, friendly touches. One, which I believe has never been done before, was that before he started to read his speech he said in English that he would like to read it in English but his "boss", Rodríguez Capote, who is the Protocol Officer, wouldn't let him. This rather startled everybody, but it was a very warm gesture of friendship. After the ceremony was over he and all the Cabinet stood on the balcony and waved goodby as we left. In every other respect I think things went with great smoothness, and the staff certainly acted like West Pointers.

Concheso arrived here Monday and I have had several personal talks with him, including one evening when he dined with Mrs. Gardner and me and afterwards he and I sat for several hours discussing problems which now face Cuba.

Through him an appointment was made, at his suggestion, for me to go to General Batista's little place in the country. Yesterday afternoon Concheso and I rode out in my car and I spent about an hour and three-quarters talking to the General with nobody

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Harvey R. Wellman, Esquire  
Department of State  
Washington, D.C.

present but Concheso. The conversation was extremely friendly and franker than I really expected it to be. While nothing definite was promised, I feel that the groundwork was laid for a very close relationship and am most hopeful that in the near future the matter you wrote about is going to be consummated. I gather that Mujal is in favor of the decree, but is having some difficulty in persuading others in his organization that it should be issued.

Some of the statements made were of a nature which I prefer not to put on paper until a definite answer is given us. I took the position that there was no politics in anything I said but that every comment I made was for the good of Cuba and a better relationship with her warm friend to the north.

Herbert Matthews has been here and we have had two long conversations with him. He is a hard man to understand, but he thoroughly agrees that at the present moment there is no other solution. It is difficult to persuade him to acknowledge this fact publicly and give credit to the General for those things which he has done. At my suggestion, Concheso made up a list of the factual things done by Batista's administration which could be authenticated, enumerating those things which were good for Cuba. Without disclosing who made it up, I handed it to Matthews this morning, stating only that these were constructive things which were on the record and which could easily be checked by him. He has promised to read them, and I hope that he may select some of them so that he can give Batista a pat on the back in his next editorial.

Everything seems to go well, and I find the staff working in excellent style.

I wrote a memorandum of a confidential nature to Don Lourie requesting reconsideration of three personnel cases, for I know that the organization is badly in need of other help and definitely needs a little morale boost - which would be accomplished if at least two of the three cases were reconsidered and the people in question allowed to stay.

I shall write you soon again, but I am under terrific pressure with calls and appointments so will have to close.

Best wishes, and be sure to pass this on to John Topping if you see fit.

Cordially,

*W.Y.*