

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

CONFIDENTIAL

DATE: February 26,
1947

SUBJECT: The Luciano - Narcotics Case

PARTICIPANTS: Señor Guillermo Belt, Ambassador of Cuba
Gen. George C. Marshall, Secretary of State
Mr. Willard F. Barber, Department of State (CRB)

COPIES TO: ILH - Mr. Morlock
ARA - Mr. Briggs
Mr. Wright
Mr. Braden
American Embassy, Habana (informally)

In a call at the Department for a different purpose, Ambassador Belt informed the Secretary that although his Government did not wish to make a formal protest, he did wish to express the displeasure which had been felt in Cuban circles as a result of the statement that if Luciano were not arrested and deported, there would be an immediate stoppage of all shipments of narcotics from the U. S. to Cuba. Ambassador Belt said that this question was annoying as it had been presented in the form of an "ultimatum". The Secretary inquired whether the cause of the Ambassador's comment was based on action of the State Department or had its origin in press reports. The Ambassador said that he was referring to press reports. The Secretary commented that he found himself occasionally reading press reports about himself which he considerably discounted.

Ambassador Belt went on to say that his government, his President, and he personally would do anything necessary and appropriate to stamp out the narcotics drug traffic. To his knowledge, there were no difficulties of this nature in Cuba during the administration of President Grau, although there had been under the preceding administration.

In response

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In response to Mr. Barber's inquiry, Ambassador Belt stated that Luciano was going to be deported to Italy within the next few days. Dr. Belt thought that even the usual period of time involved in deportation proceedings, i.e., 45 days, would not be necessary in this case. Mr. Barber stated that the thinking in the Department, which was being transmitted to Habana, was to the effect that we shared in that opinion that Luciano should be deported from Cuba to Italy.

The Secretary then summarized clearly the true situation: That it was Ambassador Belt's message to President Grau, not a demarche from the State Department, that had caused the arrest of Luciano; that the State Department had made no statement, threat, or ultimatum regarding the stoppage of narcotics. Apparently, Mr. Anslinger, the Commissioner of Narcotics, who is not in the State Department, had issued statements to the press on this subject. Mr. Barber remarked to Ambassador Belt that it was his understanding that Mr. Anslinger had called on the Ambassador yesterday to discuss the question in some detail. Ambassador Belt confirmed this understanding and said that he and Mr. Anslinger had reviewed the entire situation.

The Ambassador then took his leave, remarking upon the close friendship of Cuba and the United States and the cooperation which had always marked the official relations between the two governments.

Because of the press interest in this case, I called Ambassador Belt by telephone an hour later to inquire whether he had talked with newspaper men after his call on the Secretary. The Ambassador said that he had done so, stating that he had handed a check and a note on Lend-Lease to the Secretary. In response to press inquiries regarding an official protest regarding the Luciano case, the Ambassador stated that he had made no official protest as he had received no notification regarding stoppage of narcotics from any agency of the U. S. Government.

Carroll J. Adams

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CRB:WFB Barber:eag