

• PSF

Venezuela

PSF: Venezuela

file

Caracas, Venezuela.
June 12th, 1938.

The Honorable
Franklin D. Roosevelt,
The White House,
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. President:

Your letter of the 3d has been received
and certainly was pleased to hear from you.

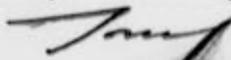
The matter therein mentioned is receiving
my attention, and hope to shortly have a report ready to send you.

I sincerely hope that you will be able
to visit Venezuela during your next winter cruise, and know
the President of Venezuela will be pleased to have you come
down. Both he and the Minister of Foreign Relations have
mentioned to me their desire to have you make a visit to
Venezuela, and hope you will be able to arrange it next winter.

I have noticed, since my arrival, a
great pro-American spirit on the part of all including those
in the Government, and only the other day when an American
pilot who was here, was killed together with a Venezuelan Army
officer, the Government spared no expense for both and gave
equal honors, and the President and his entire Cabinet attended
the funeral ceremonies, all of which was a most friendly gesture.

With sincere regards, I am,

Always sincerely,



Antonio C. Gonzalez

P.S. Enclosed is a set of Venezuelan stamps.

Personal
file
Personal

d-1 PSF: Venezuela
Venezuela

Caracas, September 15, 1938.

My dear Mr. President:

With further reference to my recent letter to you, I have had the pleasure of approaching the subject of colonization in Venezuela with the Minister of Foreign Relations as well as with the Minister of Public Works at a very recent interview, and I am informed that at the moment the Department of Agriculture is making an intensive study of the question of immigration and that one Dr. Dorus de Vasinillis, Director of Colonization of the State of Sao Paola, Brazil, and Dr. Enrique Sievres of the Immigration Section of the Economic Committee of the League of Nations are both here to cooperate with the Minister of Agriculture in the drawing of that project, which is shortly to be concluded, and at such time the Minister of Foreign Relations states that he will confer with me further as to the desirability of foreign immigration into Venezuela. The Minister of Foreign Relations also stated that it was of primary importance to his country that agriculture be developed to its utmost and that, in his opinion, he foresaw no obstacle to any foreigner wishing to come into Venezuela for colonization purposes, providing they were trained agriculturists and not simply agriculturists for the purpose of gaining entry.

The Minister of Public Works, in reply to my question on colonization in Venezuela, said that he saw no objection whatsoever to any foreign immigrant coming to Venezuela, if he possessed the necessary good character, in order to develop agricultural

activities

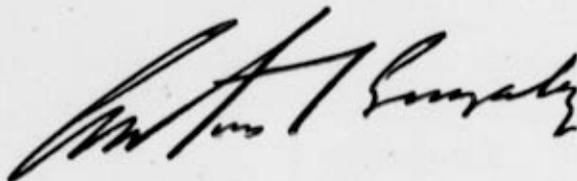
The Honorable
Franklin Delano Roosevelt,
The White House.

activities; that, although at the present and in the past his Government was and had spent large sums of money in immigration propaganda, he believed that such expense was wholly unnecessary because if his country gave the same equal protection to foreigners as it did to Venezuelans, and respected their rights as they respected their own people's rights, it was unnecessary to spend any money to entice foreigners to come to Venezuela, since they would come of their own volition and be cordially received.

I am sending this information to you without having in any way mentioned your interest in the matter, and as a forerunner of my further talks with the other Ministers of Government and perhaps even with the President himself. The Minister of Foreign Relations, however, stated quite clearly that immigration to Venezuela simply of those interested in mercantile matters he did not favor and that regardless of their good character he felt that the only type of immigration which Venezuela needed at the moment was for the development of agriculture.

I hope that the foregoing may be of some use, and in the meantime send very kindest and personal regards and best wishes for the speedy recovery of your son's health.

Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antonio Guzmán". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "A" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

file

Caracas, December 19, 1938.

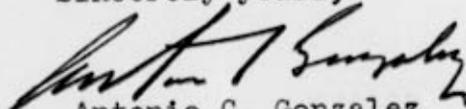
Air Mail Pouch

My dear Mr. President:

Enclosed is a copy of a despatch
sent to the Department of State which
may be of interest to you.

With personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,


Antonio C. Gonzalez

The Honorable

Franklin D. Roosevelt,

The White House,

Washington.

No. 189

Caracas, December 16, 1938.

Subject: Interview with General López Contreras, President of Venezuela.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ FOR THE PERSONAL
ATTENTION OF THE ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE.

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to report as follows: Memo on interview (December 15, 1938) with General López Contreras, President of Venezuela, by the Honorable Antonio C. Gonzalez, American Minister.

In order to evaluate any serious expression of views made by the Venezuelan President we should consider, before reporting his statements, certain aspects of his character and the domestic political relations which

he

he strives to order.

(a) Character.

A man of tenacious honesty, well educated and determined to give Venezuela an opportunity for democracy. By temperament as well as by policy he is inclined to adjust rather than to initiate decisions. He is apparently amenable to contrary influences, until he has made up his mind. By this process, some of his critics are able to create confusion. He has a fixed purpose to balance opposing political forces within the State; but, for reasons which I do not know he has not submitted a program that matches in detail his policy.

He considers himself as holding a middle position, not by compromise but by conviction. For him, the middle is a delimited area as contrasted with the boundlessness of the extreme left or right. Consequently, arrests for statements against the Government and deportations for leftist agitation complement his attacks on the economic nepotism that was fashionable under his predecessor.

He desires that history should record him as a "just man"; he looks on Simón Bolívar as his inspiring patron. His good will is his most dependable quality.

(b) The tendency (1) of the majority of the Venezuelan Congress is conservative; (2) the Federal District is of a somewhat mixed character. Both groups include

include capable, high spirited men. Political émigrés, or the sons of such have participated for the past two years in administrative positions. Some were unsuccessful; others displayed an exuberent idealism but did not always know how to implement its performance. Their ranks are now thinning. Yet, the number of those who covet disinterested public service remains unusually high; and creditably so, by comparison with other nations.

Underneath, there is some political "Bossism" but this is much less a factor of Venezuelan political life than sectionalism which is slightly racial as well as geographical. There is sharp antagonism between the Andeans and the Lowlanders. This struggle for power is the key to much of the current domestic politics. The President belongs to both groups but the Andeans control the Army.

The Andean group is convinced, I am informed, that it will win additional power within the next few months. Such a change will be interpreted as a move to the right. The Andeans, I am likewise informed, would prefer, if in control, a government of benevolent dictatorship.

Recently, certain occurrences here have had a disturbing effect on the administration. Being aware of this fact, and anticipating my own departure, I considered it opportune to attempt to obtain forthright decisions, particularly on three issues which I had previously cultivated diplomatically with the President, and also through other channels which I was
certain

certain would lead to him influentially.

(a) Political.

In view of persistent, though false, rumors that his Government was inclining to undemocratic pressure it has been my objective to encourage him to make a commitment exposing the true democratic character of his Government. I mentioned that there appeared to be a growing opinion that Venezuela might follow Mexico's confiscatory irresponsibility; and I made particular reference to the oil industry. The President replied that he could not understand the growth of such rumors since he had taken no steps in the wake of Mexico and was determined not to do so. He then asserted (1) that he would permit no such political movement to gain headway in Venezuela; (2) that he intended to act internationally in such a way as to contradict the suspicion of political irresponsibility, and contribute during his term to the social and economic betterment of Venezuela by controlling his own people through law and conveying to foreigners treatment equal to that accorded Venezuelans.

Without explicit reference to European propaganda, I intended to obtain an expression of his preference for our American principles of democracy. He expressed his agreement in a very lively manner, emphasizing his desire that Venezuela should be known as a country where equal rights and fair play could be depended upon for all.

Jewish

Jewish Immigration.

I approached this subject by reference to the advantages that immigration had brought to the United States; not only in the extension of industry through man power and investment but also through agriculture, an activity in which President López is vitally interested. President López said that he wished his country to be known more for agriculture than for oil and to this end he would encourage immigration. I stated that, given the vast expanse of Venezuelan territory, it should not be difficult to promote interest in agriculture provided immigrants were permitted to give an example and thereby attract the natives back to the soil.

I inquired if he entertained any prejudice against immigrants from Germany and Austria. He said he had no objection to those, even if they were of the Jewish race, provided they would prove useful, particularly in agricultural pursuits and special industries. I then asked the direct question - if he intended to accept Jews from Europe. He answered categorically that he would accept them. However, he planned that neither they or any other immigrant group would be permitted to colonize but instead they would be parceled and obliged to purchase land, initially granted by the Government even if such purchase required many years for fulfillment. In this way he said they would be guarded against discouragement and
prevented

prevented from returning to the cities where they might become liabilities on the Municipal or Federal Government. I am confident that this expression of policy on Jewish immigrants was sincere and definite.

I am happy to report that, on the basis of information previously received, this expression of policy represents a change of attitude.

We then spoke of the oil interests. He stated he wished to become closer to that industry, so as to avoid any future difficulty or controversy. He indicated he felt that the oil companies were like the Government in so far as they were always on the defensive against newspaper attacks. The public in general he said were not aware of the many millions of bolivars which the oil companies had spent in social improvements for the benefit of the Venezuelan employees. He, however, expressed himself as fully appreciative of those benefits. He then referred to the new labor law with special reference to the profit-sharing feature of that law and said that he wished to have the law fair and equitable in its application to both companies and State. He said that, accordingly, he was giving deliberate study to the petroleum law passed by the last Congress. I mentioned again the rumor in the United States that Venezuela might follow the example of Mexico towards the oil companies and he replied that he could not understand why such an impression should exist. He said that while

President

President he would not be inclined to follow Mexico.

In general he manifested a keen desire for equitable cooperation and understanding with the oil companies and expressed no thought that could be interpreted as antagonistic to their legal right or conceded privilege of exploitation.

Respectfully submitted,

Antonio C. Gonzalez

800
ACG/VBZ

Personally prepared by A.C.G.

Venezuela folder
1-43

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 12, 1943.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

A reminder that in the last
half of January you will have a visit
from President Medina of Venezuela.

G.G.T.

cc to Gen. Watson

(2007)
lms

Venezuela folder
1-43

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 25, 1943.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE

Will you talk with me
about this?

F. D. R.

Memorandum for the President from Hon. James F. Byrnes, 10/25/43, returning the President's memorandum of 10/16/43 to Mr. Byrnes, reading "I wish we could get from W.P.B. enough steel for one little 35,000 ton refinery to be built in Venezuela. There are real reasons why this should be done. President Medina is coming to see me in January.", together with memorandum which Mr. Byrnes received from Donald Russell, OWT, under date of 10/13/43, in re above.

7-1

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

*file
Confidential*

January 14, 1944.

MEMORANDUM FOR GRACE:

Please let me have this when
President Medina comes in.

F.D.R.

GM
This telegram must be
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (SC)

Caracas

Dated January 11, 1944

Rec'd 2:57 a.m., 12th

Secretary of State,

Washington.

U.S. URGENT

34, January 11, 8 p.m.

President Medina and party may desire to discuss following matters in Washington. This refers to Department's 992, December 29, midnight.

One. Additional oil refinery equipment, although I feel that President Medina understands our situation under war conditions.

Two. Additional Lend-Lease equipment. Embassy hopes for precise details shortly.

Three. Additional equipment for government-operated air lines and new private freight line. Full summary of present LAV situation in despatch 5339, January 10.

Four. Projects requiring materials from the United States such as Lagu airport works; Caracas water and sewer (see despatch 4712, August 11); new gold fields equipment; Maracaibo sewer; seven bridges on Barinas road; railway equipment for former German railway (none so far requested); new machinery for 300 ton cement plant at Guanta; rubber tire needs (airgram being sent);

question of