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Havana, November 17 th 1919.

Major General Enoch H. Crowder.  
WASHINGTON.

Dear General Crowder:-

Let me hope that you will kindly pardon me for engaging your very busy attention in matters connected with those Cuban politics with which you are so familiar and which have so often made you work so hardly here in Cuba. But the fact is that you are perhaps the only American thoroughly acquainted with our men, with our land and also with our needs, and, on the other hand, your position in the United States is such that with the help of your good-will towards us and the weight of your learned experience on our things, you are certainly more than qualified, gifted, if we can say so, to get a clear insight of the condition of affairs at present in Cuba and of the best policy to be followed under the circumstances.

You know well that in communicating with you on those matters, I am not actuated by any special political interest in connection with the coming elections, for it is a notorious fact, of which I think you are yourself aware, that I am not a cultivator of politics and much less am I a partisan politician, my present position being of a somewhat professional nature and my acceptance of it being due not to any political ambition but only to my belief that I can thus render some service to my country. Accordingly, my wishes as to the course that our political matters should take in the near future, are only to secure for the presidential term which is to commence in 1921, a good and proper personnel on the integrity of whose incumbents, nobody should feel justified in raising the slightest doubt. If this end is, as we all expect, duly secured, the political color or fraction to which success may come, will not, provided of course that it be honest and clean, weigh much in the order of my preferences, for, as before stated, I am far, very far from being a militant and much less an uncompromising and combative campaign politician.

This will make clear to you and to everybody who knows me as well as you do, my position in regard to the next elections and also the candid desinterestedness of my ideas, as also of my wishes and my hopes in connection with electoral matters from which you and everybody may rest assured that I do not expect or even desire, any personal advantage. So distant do I wish to keep myself from all sort of active campaign politics, that I beg to request you to consider this letter as strictly confidential as far as not letting it to become more or less publicly known, for I do not even like to have my name circulated in close association with actual local political topics.

Coming now to the main subject of this letter, you are I suppose informed that some kind of suggestion has been personally and privately made through Mr. Gonzalez, your Minister here, to General Menocal, to the effect that some measure of American Supervision in the coming elections, might be perhaps advisable and efficient in the interest of the legality and purity of the voting function. I know that General Menocal has positively and emphatically expressed his uncompromising opposition to that idea of supervision and I must own that I concur in his views and objections on grounds which seem

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to me conclusive and on which I wish to entertain you for only a cursory consideration of the matter. The motives on which General Menocal rests his opposition, are, as I view the matter, so very cogent and impressive as to make me feel almost confident that they will also appeal to your learned mind and perhaps bring you to share our opinions on the subject.

As you probably know, for your knowledge is very ample in regard to things in Cuba, the suggestion for that plan of electoral inspection by American Supervisors, has had its only source in a fraction of the Liberal Party, namely, the fraction following the leadership of General J. M. Gomez. The other branches or fractions of the Liberal Party, have not only not indorsed the scheme of supervision, but have openly and publicly given expression to their opposition to it and the Conservative Party has unanimously objected to the idea of any interference with or even supervision of the elections. This will certainly justify the conclusion that the measure is not one desired and recommended by a majority of the people here, but only by a fraction which may perhaps hope to derive from it some measure of political strength, and, accordingly, if the plan of supervision is not endorsed by any majority of the people of Cuba it cannot place to its credit the will of the majority of the voters.

This is not, however, the only side of the case on which it can be examined and considered, for there are other very capital reasons on the force of which we all feel justified in hoping that when they shall be weighed by the American Officials in your Government, they will assent to the view that the plan should be dismissed out of regard for the prestige and moral character of General Menocal, who would otherwise suffer greatly at seeing himself disparaged by any action on the part of your Government, which would plainly imply the most complete diffidence and lack of trust in his moral character as Chief of the Cuban Executive.

To look with favor upon a plan of American Supervision in the coming elections on the suggestion of the Liberal fraction before mentioned, would indeed, mean the acknowledgement and admission by General Menocal, that all the groundless allegations of electoral frauds made against him by the political opposition to the Government and to the Party in power, are true or have at least some measure of foundation, and nobody can expect from General Menocal that he should lend himself, by assenting to a supervision on those grounds, to such an unjustifiable stultification of his character and reputation. Any such yielding on his part would only bring about most utter discredit and complete disrepute. His position would be so difficult and wanting so much in propriety and prestige, that nobody can say what action would he take, under those circumstances. I am not, of course, authorized to make statements in his name or on his behalf and I do not desire that any such construction, namely, that I am speaking for him, should be given to my words, but I would not be surprised at all, if in case the hypothesis of supervision came to crystalize in some definite shape, General Menocal would think himself justified in believing that the least he could do under the pressure of that painful and humiliating action, should be to withdraw from office by tendering his resignation and making a public statement to the people about the motives of his action. And the Liberal fraction requesting supervision would be the only one that would benefit from all this chaotic condition of things, for it would exert itself to spread the belief that the U.S. Government looks with favor upon the

coming into power of that Liberal fraction and that the action of supervision has been intensified against Menocal and his party and in favor of the aforesaid Liberal fraction.

Now, the fact, the undeniable fact, is that General Menocal has furnished the most direct and convincing evidence of this purity and impartiality in regard to the coming elections, when he invited you to come to Cuba to give us all the benefit of your learning and experience on electoral and census matters, and at ~~his~~ his request you framed the Election Law which was promptly passed by our Congress and immediately approved and caused to be published by President Menocal. This affords a complete and most full evidence of the integrity of his intentions and purposes, for you know well that his recommendations and desires in connection with the intended framing of the new election law, were to the effect that it should contain and provide all the safeguards and guaranties necessary to securing a fair and legal election.

And does it not seem unjustified and even uncalled for, that in the face of all this brilliant and worthiness of the candidates, because it is not in his, to prevent nomination which might be considered undesirable for many reasons and many precedents, and that is almost the only very sore point of the whole matter, namely, the personal record, of some of the candidates that may be nominated. As to the Conservative Party, however, there is no doubt that General Menocal and his friends, may be in a position to do a good deal towards a good selection of fair candidates, and it is his (Aqui continua un párrafo pero esta en condiciones que no se puede escribir).

General Menocal is certainly very thankful for the kind interest shown by the U.S. Government in our coming elections and he realizes the good will of that Government, but he is certain, and I share his ideas on this subject, that as far as his powers under you law will authorize him, he is fully qualified to supervise all the proceedings and to take such actions as may be necessary to have the law enforced and complied with and to prosecute those who may be guilty of violating its provisions. If the result, contrary to our expectations on the matter, should not be satisfactory, then the further remedy, which, of course, would have to be more drastic, could only be found in a more close and stringent electoral legislation. The only evil for the avoidance of which General Menocal could not easily provide, would be not that of the illegality of the electoral process, but that of the integrity and worthiness of the candidates, because it is not in his hands to prevent nominations which might be considered undesirable for many reasons and many precedents, and that is almost the only very sore point of the whole matter, namely, the personal record, of some of the candidates that may be nominated. As to the Conservative Party, however, there is no doubt that General Menocal and his friends, may be in a position to do a good deal towards a good selection of fair candidates, and it is his purpose to cooperate to that and to the best of his ability. Only honorable and straight persons ought to be selected and a statement of your Government to that effect would certainly prove very efficient as its statements against the revolt of 1917, contributed, in a large measure, as you certainly remember, to discourage and put down that illegal uprising.

Let me say, before bringing this already too long letter to a close, that opposition to supervision does not rest on any fear that the elections should be publicly witnessed by the whole world. No, supervision is opposed only on the grounds before set forth, for as to the publicity of the election proceedings before, during and after the voting at the polls, any body who wishes may come to Cuba

and witness and watch all the acts connected with the subject, provided they do it in a private capacity and merely as spectators.

I have not considered the question of supervision in connection with the general spirit and even the letter of the law, which you drew up because I do not wish to discuss the matter from its legal standpoints, but I do not see how an official supervision of the elections would take place without infringing upon the fundamental rules of your law, which carefully excludes all sorts of government agency in that matter. Supervision of those elections would certainly conflict with those rules which have been decided upon as safeguards for the legality of the elections.

Excuse me, once more, for the length of this letter, which I beg you to read and consider carefully, as the expression of the reasons and motives why, in my mind, General Menocal, is fully justified in feeling that any plan to have the elections officially supervised under his Government, by the United States, is inconsistent with ~~his~~ his ideas of honorability and self-respect and why also, it is my opinion that General Menocal should have the opportunity of showing and displaying his fitness and power to have the elections carried out in a legal, peaceful and proper manner, for it was with this purpose, and only with this purpose, that he invited and caused you to Cuba, in order to frame a new law under which a fair, honest and legal election could be held here in Cuba.

Yours very sincerely.

*Pablo Desvermeil*



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