

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: June 8, 1939.

SUBJECT: Refugees. Cuban attitude toward Refugee ships and

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Wright
Miss Clarkson

COPIES TO:

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MR. WRIGHT: Anticipating that Mr. Welles will be very much occupied today, I am going to give you a message to give to him:

I had previously impressed upon the Cuban Secretary of State that I had specific instructions not to intervene in this matter, therefore all of my observations were informal and based upon humanitarian considerations alone.

Yesterday at 7:30 P.M. I saw both the President and the Secretary of State. I broached the subject first to the latter and recalled to his attention the attitude which I had assumed, which he said he recollected perfectly and appreciated. I then explained my present request that he might receive the representative of the Chase Bank. He said he would; and that he would communicate with the President.

At eight o'clock in the same gathering, the President sent for me and I represented to him what I had been instructed to say. I repeated to him the reference to the position which I had assumed, which I made it clear I understood the President understood and appreciated the position taken by the Government of the United States in this matter. I then told him what the Chase Bank wanted to communicate to him. He said specifically: "Does this refer to the SS ST. LOUIS?" I said: "I understand that it does." He then said: "The ST. LOUIS matter is to be considered a closed incident in view of the fact that the provisions of the law that \$500 per person be deposited was not met. I gave notice through the press and the Secretary of the Treasury that the time limit expired on the 6th." He said: "Does the Chase Bank wish to confer on the matter of other ships." If so, I shall be very glad to discuss the matter with Mr. Finley." I then again called to mind the fact that I was speaking purely through our humanitarian interest. and he responded by saying that he had always been mindful of the situation from the humanitarian angle and that if the records were examined, it would be found that Cuba had been more generous than any other country in the matter of accepting refugees. He will see the representative of the Chase Bank as much before twelve as possible.

The FLANDERS is back in the harbor from Vera Cruz and has 100 refugees on board. The Bank did not have instructions last night, but have received instructions this morning, that the money set up is applicable to the FLANDERS. They now have some one at

the Immigration office and on the ship.