

September 12, 1962

Letter from Dutch Embassy, Havana (Boissevain), 12 September 1962

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Summary:

A letter from Gideon Boissevain, the Dutch Ambassador to Cuba reporting to Amsterdam. The letter primarily concerns the press coverage in Cuba of the rising crisis. Particular attention is paid to the Soviet guarantees of Cuban security and the American responses to the discovered missiles. In Cuba there is fear of an invasion by the United States making use of foreign legionnaires, despite Kennedy's claims there is no plan for an attack on Cuba.

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CUBA:

Politics

The press has burst into jubilant tones, as the attached front page of "Revolución" shows, now that Moscow has finally delivered a statement containing a military guarantee in case of aggression against Cuba or against any other country that would ask for help. The "press of the button" which had been celebrated in Havana earlier - until the S.U. had caused the rejoicing to come to an end - has now become a reality because this time there can be no doubt: "...today Cuba cannot be attacked in the hope that this aggression will remain unpunished. If this does occur it will mean the start of the war....."

Foreign reactions to the statement are also being published including those from American senators who speak of "bluff," "propaganda," "no longer be browbeat," and so forth.

If the Cuban leaders earlier addressed the US provocatively now they will be beside themselves. It therefore seems apparent to the observer there is a risk of a conflict with nuclear weapons.

Yet what has actually happened? President Kennedy has stated that he has no intention of attacking Cuba (although, according to the Cuban press, he used the unfortunate expression "not yet"), provocative firing at hotels and ships afterwards has been the work of Cuban counter-revolutionaries and this was followed by the request to Congress regarding the mobilization into active service of 150,000 men in relation to the situation in Berlin and Cuba, among other things. Therefore the warning from Moscow can be seen as a propaganda countermove: "You increase the size of your army, we send experienced troops home and replace them with recruits... is the US that afraid of an attack from Cuba? and so forth."

In order to be prepared for anything the Cuban government is alleging that Washington intends to use legionnaires (French and Spanish) in its next attempt at invasion. Of course they will attempt to persuade the Kremlin to accept the thesis that an attack by such troops would be equal to a landing by American marines. May those in Washington keep cool heads!

The Ambassador,

G.W.Boissevain.