

November 2, 1962

Letter from Dutch Embassy, Havana (Boissevain), 2 November 1962

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Summary:

The letter begins with Boissevain criticizing Castro's speech, claiming he could have written it before it was ever delivered. The speech concerned Castro's meeting with UN Secretary General U Thant, and the contents of the speech were such that the Cuban people were kept at boiling point. Boissevain claims this is a necessity to make the people accept the sacrifices demanded of them and forget the hardships they face. Castro's exclamations that "we are above all Marxist-Leninists" raised applause, but Soviet support has died down. Boissevain suspects Anastas Mikoyan will have a hard time reasoning with Castro after the disappointment in the eyes of Cuba.

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C U B A:

Politics.

I could have written the speech made by Fidel Castro last night to report to the Cuban people about his meeting with U Thant before it was delivered. The people must be kept at boiling point to make the many sacrifices which are demanded of them and to forget the many hardships which are imposed on them as a result of anti-American policy and the shiftlessness of the people themselves. The interim [UN] Secretary General came to sound out the revolutionary government concerning a settlement of the burning issue which threatened the world with war, namely the Russian missile bases and the American blockade. Yet he was presented with a series of complaints which, however justified some of them might be, concern the long-term deterioration of US-Cuban relations. According to my perception this can be traced back to the non-execution of the indemnification part of the agricultural reform law and the subsequent confiscation of American property in Cuba, also without indemnification. The ensuing development is only too well known. The case has turned into a kind of Corsican vendetta.

However much the prime minister has urged discipline, understanding for the world political problems of the Soviet Union, and the expression of friendship with Moscow and its leaders, followed by the exclamation, "above all we are Marxist-Leninists" (approving looks from the old communists and several minutes of applause), all Soviet flags and slogans have nevertheless disappeared from the streets, even the words of welcome to the astronaut [Yuri] Gagarin which still hung by the road to the airport in Spanish and Russian.

There is great disappointment that Fidel missed such an opportunity for blackmail and fussing. [Anastas] Mikoyan will have a hard time because the Cuban is as intransigent with the one side as he is with the other. But he has to be careful: if he goes too far or if an excited revolutionary does something imprudent with respect to the Armenian leader of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin might just leave him flat!

Fidel called the inspection of the dismantling of the missile bases an American attempt to humiliate Cuba. On this sole point Mikoyan could make a pacifying gesture by giving Washington the solemn assurance that the "strategic weapons" installed by Russia will indeed be removed. This would allow for a return to the "status quo ante" [before] the recent crisis. I do not dissemble that such would by any means lead to an amelioration of the relations between the US and Cuba in which the great stumbling block is the communism accepted by the revolutionary government which has brought the US to the mentality described in the verse:

"I do not like thee Dr. Fell, the reason why I cannot tell, but all the same I know full well, I do not like thee Dr. Fell."

The Ambassador,

G.W. Boissevain.