

October 24, 1962

Letter from Dutch Embassy, Havana (Boissevain), 24 October 1962

Citation:

"Letter from Dutch Embassy, Havana (Boissevain), 24 October 1962", October 24, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archives, The Hague, Archives of the Dutch Legation (later Embassy) in Cuba, 1955-1964, 2.05.169, inv. 120. Obtained for CWIHP by Rimko van der Maar and translated for CWIHP by Bastiaan Bouwman.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115524>

Summary:

In this letter to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Boissevain speaks about Cuban attempts to move native members of the diplomatic staff and housekeeping staff to provide information concerning their employers. A report is given about the French embassy. The gardener for the Dutch Embassy is reported to have been visited by government officials and was subject to beatings when he refused to give information about his Dutch employers.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Dutch

Contents:

Translation - English

To His Excellency
the Minister of Foreign Affairs in The Hague

CONFIDENTIAL.

2345/550.

Havana, 24 October 1962.

C U B A:

Espionage.

Through my report No. 1671/418 d[ate]d 31 July 1962 I have informed Your Excellency with regard to attempts from the government to move Cuban members of the staff of diplomatic missions and the housekeeping staff to provide information concerning their employers.

In the French Embassy this has led to a resolute demarche by the Quai d'Orsay to the Cuban Ambassador who no doubt will have informed his government thereof. Notwithstanding this a second attempt was undertaken: a Cuban secretary, whose husband had previously been imprisoned on suspicion of anti-revolutionary intentions, was summoned at a police commissariat, supposedly for reading a compromising American text. When she attempted to show that the piece objected to was completely harmless an interrogator of the infamous Departamento de Seguridad del Estado (G2) appeared and told her that the accusation had only been a pretext for asking her what she was doing for the revolution or what she was prepared to do. Was there not a member of the embassy staff who spoke German? Indeed such was the case (the Alsatian Vogt). If yes, perhaps she could busy herself with the acquisition of information regarding the embassy of the Federal Republic [of Germany] and not the French....

When I was temporary deacon of the Corps Diplomatique I addressed a personal letter to Dr. [RaUI] Roa, the Minister of Foreign Relations, to complain about these practices on behalf of my colleagues (the nunciature had also voiced a complaint) and myself.

The reason was that the gardener of the official residence had been visited by a person who had made him propositions like the ones indicated above. He would among other things note the license plates of the automobiles of visitors to which the man responded that he

1. mostly carried out his work in the garden behind the residence and therefore was unable to observe arriving automobiles,

2. that his employers had treated him well, reason for him not to lend himself to such work.

Shortly thereafter three persons came to his house, took him with them in a car, subjected him to a harsh interrogation during which one of them struck him in the jaw and left him on the street, far from his house. Since then these agents have returned once more.

In my letter I argued that I thought it honorable for Cuba that all these persons had refused and - despite the dangers this presented them with - had reported the matter to their chiefs, and that, as I trusted, this statement would result in the immediate cessation of these threats and bribery.

The response of the Minister was an "Es ist nicht wahr!" ["It is not true!"] My

accusation was an offense to the Departamento de Seguridad del Estado (G2) which was incapable of doing such a thing. Perhaps agents of the Central Intelligence Agency had played a role in the events!

An oral demarche by the French Ambassador and myself to the vice-minister of Foreign Relations followed which, in the case of Burggraaf Du Gardier, has led to a tempestuous talk.

Today the gardener informed me that the same person who had "visited" him the first time had come to smooth things over: there had been a misunderstanding, protection of the embassies, good relations with the Netherlands...

Could one be more naïve?

The Ambassador,

G.W. Boissevain.