

July 1, 1963

Cable from Dutch Embassy, Havana (Boissevain), 1 July 1963

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<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115698>

Summary:

The cable concerns a noon meal held at the Dutch Embassy, with Fidel Castro as the guest of honor. The primary topic of discussion at the meal is the status of the Cuban economy and the industrialization process, along with trade and commercial relations with the Soviet Union.

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TO: NERECODI [Dutch Government Code Service, The Hague]

BY COURIER.

CONFIDENTIAL

With respect to my message sent via a different channel and a note included in the "Brief Cuban Notices" of this week I will allow myself a few more remarks.

The noon meal at the Embassy, where Dr. Castro was present as a guest of honor, was followed by his appearance two days later - again at the fixed hour! - as the enunciator at the reception given on the occasion of the induction of H.H. Pope Paul VI.

One of his close staff members stated that the prime minister would, if possible, gladly accept like invitations. Although this may well be one of Fidel Castro's whims, it seems more probable this is a purposeful attempt at rapprochement with the West, bearing in mind that this may replace the US in matters of economy. Khrushchev giving a nudge in this direction is also a possibility: it would reduce the burden on the Soviet Union and vex the US.

Fidel inquired after Dutch export products and breeding cattle, which was utilized to send him a number of books and booklets. During his presence at the Embassy I had drawn his attention to the fact that there still are Dutch experts in the area of sugar planting-Cuban sugarcane is "descendant" from the testing station in Pasuruan - and that complete sugar factories can be supplied (Stork) [a major Dutch machine factory].

The plans which the prime minister had for the industrialization of the island seemed to me only partially economically responsible, unless they intend to transform this country "à la Russe" into a closed economic region with high prices and an advanced form of mercantilism or autarky. I therefore remarked that Cuban sugar, for which the Soviet Union pays 6 cents per lb., is sold to the Soviet people for 46 cents (what democratic government would dare to do so?!) and compared such a situation with that of the Dominican Republic under Trujillo.

Fidel Castro recounted that during his visit to the Soviet Union he had the opportunity to observe the effect of [a] megaton of bombs.

Before lunch an officer of the security service appeared in order to inspect the residence with regard to security [one word illegible, presumably to the effect of "of the prime minister"]. This window had to be shut, who lived in that house, where would Fidel Castro sit at the table, etc.

I was reminded of the attempts by that same service to move my gardener to espionage (see letter No. 2345/550 d.d. 24.10.1962)1...

My servants, who are all disgruntled about the current situation, were nevertheless very excited and when Fidel Castro before departing made his habitual visit to the kitchen, from the streets too there were "sounds of jubilation" from the public at large.

BOISSEVAIN 29.

[i] Reproduced above - ed.