

July 24, 1963

**Letter from Dutch Embassy, Havana (Boissevain), 24
July 1963**

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Summary:

Boissevain reports on Fidel Castro. During a banquet held by the Egyptian ambassador, Castro speaks to Swiss Ambassador Masset of a decision to nationalize the former building of the U.S. embassy, currently in use by the Swiss embassy acting as U.S. representatives. Castro is noted as having "the air of one who is boasting to a trusted friend about how he has crossed an opponent." Boissevain thinks it best to keep on Castro's good side and requests an illustrated work of the Netherlands to be sent as a gesture of goodwill.

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C U B A:

Fidel and the Netherlands.

After the latest doings by Dr. Fidel Castro I wonder if, had he received instead of "Das Kapital" the Bible and met a preacher or priest, the "máximo líder" would have become a devout Christian with all the ramifications thereof for the course of the revolution and relations with the US.

The above thought came to me as a result of Fidel delivering a two hours long lecture at the University on the subject of ... the Netherlands. Apparently he was so struck by the contents of the books and booklets which I had sent to him that he wanted everyone to partake in his discovery.

Yesterday evening, at the reception given by the U.A.R. [Egyptian] Ambassador, the prime minister was already busy saying goodbye when he saw undersigned and inquired where the Swiss T.Z. [chargée d'affaires] was (he had already left). He had wanted to inform Mr. [Charles] Masset of a decision by the Cuban government which entailed nationalization of the former building of the US embassy, currently in use by the Swiss embassy acting as the representative of the interests of the US. As if he intended to provoke a reaction by me, while the Ambassadors of the Soviet Union [Aleksandr Alekseyev] and China [Shen Jian] stood guard on both sides, he elaborated to me most vividly about this retaliation for the freezing of Cuban assets in the US, during which he tapped my arm and - before he was unfortunately called to the telephone - had the air of one who is boasting to a trusted friend about how he has crossed an opponent.

The best response to the announcement in question would have been: "After you have already confiscated 1000 million dollars' worth of American property, why not throw the building in as well!" and then speak of the taking charge of the administration of the refinery of Shell and so forth.

It seems better, however, to use the "goodwill" with regard to our country to induce negotiations about such matters. I repeat my request to be sent a magnificently illustrated work about the Netherlands to present to Dr. Castro, to ensure that his current appreciation of our country remains undiminished.

The Ambassador,

[BOISSEVAIN]