

September 19, 1963

Letter from Dutch Embassy, Havana, 19 September 1963

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Summary:

This letter concerns Cuba's political and economic isolation. Castro has attempted to repair relations with the capitalist countries to no avail, and the author relates his/her own experiences with Castro. Che Guevara, Cuba's Minister of Industry, approached the author and staff asking for economic assistance in the form of trade. The author relates how he has submitted a request to a high standing industry in the Netherlands if supplies can be shipped to Cuba.

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Havana, 19 September 1963.

Cuba's foreign policy.

One does not get the impression that Havana's foreign policy has been subject to substantial change over the past months. The much discussed "politics of the smile" does not seem more than a tactical maneuver by Castro which is principally aimed at improving economic relations with those "capitalist" countries here accredited and to soften Cuba's political isolation. In the recent past these attempts have manifested themselves in certain advances to the representatives of the Netherlands, England, Canada, France, and the Vatican. As part of this Castro among other things accepted an invitation for a déjeuner at the home of my predecessor and by the British and Canadian Ambassadors while he made an appearance at a reception by the Temporary Envoy of France and the Nunciature. It is known that the Cuban Embassies in the "capitalist" countries have received orders to contract experts in the most far-flung technical and scientific areas.

Ambassador Maristany in The Hague has proven himself active in such matters. The Minister of Industry, "Che" Guevara recently approached my first staff member with the question whether the Netherlands would be willing to deliver goods of non-Dutch patent to Cuba. Clearly this referred to American-produced goods. As has been relayed the vice-minister of said Ministry asked me if the company Tomassen in De Steeg would be willing and able to supply a 3000 horsepower gasturbine for the ESSO oil refinery that was nased [nationalized - trans.] in 1960. In this case however it should be assumed that Havana has so far not succeeded in procuring this vital equipment from the USSR or from another country of the "peace camp." Also some days ago a visa was issued to a highly placed member of the Revolutionary Army, "comandante" Félix Paulino Torres González, and to an official of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform, Jaime Enrique Medina Sierra, who, after visiting the USSR, China and other communist countries, will travel to the Netherlands to study some "technical agrarian questions." This at least according to an announcement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here. During the visit I paid to Dr. [Raúl] Roa to hand him a copy of my credentials, he emphasized the desirability of strengthening economic ties with the Netherlands.

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[R.H. Pos]