



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Havana, Cuba, August 13, 1940.

Airmail

Dear Friend:

I received by airmail your letter of August 7 with which you send me the very interesting letter from the Chef de Cabinet of King Leopold to Mr. Richard, the copy of the letter from Vicomte van de Vyvere, and the report which your Spanish Secretary has sent you of his impressions in Spain. I have read all these as you may be sure with the greatest interest. The memorandum on the conditions in Spain is particularly interesting and is confirmatory of the information which I have had from other sources. It is indeed ridiculous for Spain, in the unfortunately impoverished situation in which she is, to believe that she can regain her former empire and her possessions in this hemisphere. It is even more ridiculous for anyone in Spain with good sense to believe that Germany or Italy, if they could lay hands on any of these countries in the western hemisphere, would permit Spain to have any control over them. Of course for the present there are those in Spain who are willing enough to act as the catspaw for Germany and Italy. I can assure you that so far as these western hemisphere countries are concerned they have as little desire for Spanish domination as they have for German or Italian. Here in Cuba where the Spanish element is strong there is a fundamental attachment on the part of a certain element to Spain, but the last thing they would want would be to have Spain exercise any control over Cuba. All elements here know on which side their bread is buttered.

I was particularly interested also in the letter from Vicomte van de Vyvere. It shows indeed a fine spirit. Confidentially, I can tell you that Mr. van Cauweleart has been in touch with me and wants to come to the United States with his wife and some members of his family. He is now in Lisbon and I am trying to help him as much as I can to get over here. I am confident that it is not safe for him to return to Belgium, no matter what promises might be made to him. I am very much attached to him, and while he was Bürgermeister at Antwerp he was really a good and constructive friend of our country. I feel it an obligation to be of any

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help

AIR MAIL

He is trying to seek a solution of his problems and would like to take them up with the Treasury Department. I have suggested to him that I am sure that you would be glad to see him, and afterwards put him in touch with the proper people in the Treasury. You can take my word for it that he is one of the finest characters you will have ever had contact with, and you will be intensely interested in knowing him for he is so well informed. He was during the lifetime of King Albert his principal adviser, and he did a good deal to help the young King Leopold. I know that Secretary Hull has very great regard for him, and I feel sure that the President would recall him. Joe Davies in Washington can also tell you about Heineman and give you an intimate picture of him.

The interests which Heineman has controlled have always been constructive and he has worked closely with our country. The purchases, of his companies, in the United States have been enormous. He has now an extraordinarily difficult task before him in keeping these companies going with Belgium occupied by the Germans who are naturally desirous of putting their hands on these companies and their vast assets. His problem, I think, is one of the most important that will arise under our control of foreign assets in the United States and, knowing you as I do, I know that you would be interested in seeing that his problem receives very careful and sympathetic consideration from our Government. I am confident that it will be in our interest. If I did not feel that way I would not write you in this way in spite of my personal friendship for Mr. Heineman and of my great regard for him.

I hope that if he gets in touch with you, you will find time to receive him. He can be reached in New York through Auchincloss, Alley & Duncan, 50 Broadway, who have been acting as his lawyers in the United States for some years.

It is my hope that my wife and I will be able to leave here on August 20th to spend a few weeks in cooler weather at home. I will be in Washington before I return to Cuba, and look forward very much to seeing you and Mrs. Morgenthau. I realize what tremendous burdens you are carrying and my thoughts are very often with you. I am trying to be as helpful here as I can.

With every good wish,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

GEORGE S. MESSERSMITH