Habana, October 3, 1940

Dear Mr. Fell:

I am taking the liberty of writing you again with respect to my friend, Dr. Frans Van Cauwelaert. He has secured his immigration visa at our Consulate General in Lisbon and proceeded thence to New York where he has now made legal entry for permanent residence. I understand that his family, which includes Mrs. Van Cauwelaert and some of the children, are still in Lisbon and that they are supposed to receive their visas early in October.

I was home for a few weeks on business and saw Mr. Van Cauwelaert in New York. He tells me that his plans for the present are rather uncertain and that he may find it necessary to return to Lisbon and perhaps proceed to England in the near future on matters connected with the Government of Belgium. Mr. Van Cauwelaert has a very high sense of responsibility to his country and naturally wishes to be as useful as possible. Under these circumstances, it may be necessary for Mrs. Van Cauwelaert and the family to remain in Lisbon for some time after they have secured their immigration visas, but I have impressed on him the importance of Mrs. Van Cauwelaert and the children securing their visas in October which, I understand is practicable, and that they have been told that this can be done. Should, by any chance, they not be able to leave Lisbon for the United States during the life of the visa, which I understand is four months, they could, of course, get renewal of the visa during the current quota year.

Mr. Van Cauwelaert

The Honorable
Herbert Claibourne Fell,
American Minister,
Lisbon, Portugal.
Mr. Van Cauwelaert is very much concerned with regard to his family as it is possible that they may have to leave Portugal when he is not there and it may be difficult for them to get passage on an American ship. I have told him that I would write you in regard to this. I understand that we still have some American ships calling at Lisbon and, of course, they take on first American citizens and then, if there is room, take on aliens.

My thought in writing you is that if Mrs. Van Cauwelaert should approach you in this matter, that you will be good enough to facilitate their securing passage. Mr. Van Cauwelaert has been such a good friend of our country over so many years that I feel we should show him and his family every possible consideration. I have told Mr. Van Cauwelaert that if Mrs. Van Cauwelaert needs any assistance in the way of passage, etc., during his absence from Lisbon that she should not hesitate to get in touch with you.

While I think Mrs. Van Cauwelaert is provided with adequate funds, I would want you to know that, in case funds are needed for the transportation of herself and family, I will be very glad to refund to you personally any expenditure which you may make for the passage of Mrs. Van Cauwelaert and her family to the United States.

I hesitate to burden you with this matter but I wish to be as helpful as I possibly can to Mr. Van Cauwelaert for the reasons which I have already indicated to you.

I am sending you an extra copy of this letter which you may wish to furnish the Consul General for his information.

Believe me, with very good wishes,

Cordially yours,

George S. Messersmith
His Excellency
George S. Messersmith
American Embassy
Havana, Cuba

My dear Messersmith:

I have received your letters on the subject of Mr. van Cauwelaert, and have eventually gotten in touch with him through the Belgian Legation. He is in good health and most anxious eventually to come to the United States to settle if it is impossible to return to Belgium. In any case he wants his partner to go to the United States on account of his photographic supplies business.

I do not know whether or not Havana is full of refugees anxious to reach the United States, but the situation here is so strained that it is almost impossible to induce any Consulate to give visas. Mr. van Cauwelaert intends to put himself on the immigration list, but his partner only wants a temporary visa. I have suggested to him to ask you to have special instructions sent in the case of his partner who will probably ask for a visa at Bordeaux.

I want to take the occasion to thank you very heartily for having given me the opportunity to meet such an interesting man as Mr. van Cauwelaert. He came here the other day and we talked for about two hours on all sorts of subjects. He is an extraordinarily cultivated man, and I sincerely hope to see him again in the near future and enjoy a repetition of our talk. I am really in your debt. I have met few people who have interested me more.

Let me know if I can be of any further service to you. I am always at your disposal.

I am, Yours most sincerely,

Herbert Pell
American Minister.
Lisbon, Portugal  
July 19, 1940

His Excellency  
George S. Messersmith  
American Embassy  
Havana, Cuba  

My dear Ambassador:

I have received your letter of July 10th and have made every effort to get in touch with van Cauwelaert, but so far have been unsuccessful. The Belgian Legation has at last gotten the information that he has gone to France. They expect he will be back here in the near future.

In the meantime I am entirely at your disposal, and I shall show him your letter. I will do everything I can, both in the way of advice and financial assistance. I am always glad to help in any way possible.

I am,

Yours most sincerely,

Herbert Pell,  
American Minister.

HP:GT
19/7/1940

CONFIRMATION

via WESTERN-UNION

OFFICIAL

MLT AMBASSADOR HAVANA

CUBA

F. MESSERSMITH and the BLEGIAN LEGATION SAYS that VANCAUNELAERT LEFT PORTUGAL FOR FRANCE TWO WEEKS AGO PROBABLY WITH VICHY WITH THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED 8-20

PELL

Herbert C. Pell
American Legation, Lisbon.
AIR MAIL

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Habana, Cuba,
July 10, 1940.

The Honorable
Herbert C. Pell,
American Minister,
Lisbon, Portugal.

Dear Mr. Pell:

I fear that I am molesting you with letters and requests at a time when you must be very greatly burdened, but in this instance I am under the compelling necessity of writing you concerning one of my oldest and most intimate friends. I have just had letters from Franz van Cawwellert, a Belgian subject, who is staying at the Grande Hotel de Italia, Monte Estoril, Riviera de Portugal, which I understand is near Lisbon. Mr. van Cawwellert was Mayor of Antwerp during the greater part of my ten years' stay there as Consul General. During that time he showed himself as an understanding and helpful friend of the United States. Some years ago he made a visit to the United States, and the President and Mr. Hull who saw him both had the highest regard for him. He has been an extremely constructive element in Belgium and is a true patriot. He is one of those few men in Europe who, in recent years, have deserved to be called statesmen. I feel that it is my obligation, personally and officially, to do everything that I can to enable him to bring himself and his family to a place of safety. He is undoubtedly one of those men against whom the German wrath will be most active, and I think that his life and even perhaps that of members of his family will be definitely in danger if he or they fall into German hands. There are few Belgians against whom the Germans feel more bitterly because they know his great understanding and the respect which he enjoys in his country. He is therefore one of those Belgians whom the Germans would make every effort to get out of the way.

In view of the status of the Belgian quota and the waiting time which may be involved, and in view of the regulations with respect to visitors' visas, it may seem desirable for Mr. van Cawwellert and his family to proceed to Cuba. I have consistently refused to intervene with the Cuban authorities in cases of this kind, but I can assure you that if Mr. van Cawwellert and his family wish to come to Cuba that the necessary instructions will be issued to the Cuban officials in Portugal by the Cuban Government here to give them visas for Cuba. Once the
family is here, I will undertake their support. I have every confidence that Mr. van Cavwelaert and his family will eventually be able to proceed to the United States where, because of his great capacities, I can see any number of ways in which he can make a new existence for himself. You may be sure, therefore, and you can assure Consul General Young, that even though Mr. van Cavwelaert have no funds, I am prepared to make the necessary advances, and I will see that they will not become a public charge in Cuba or in my country.

In spite of my wide acquaintance among so many of those who have suffered, this is the first case in which I am prepared to make financial advances and to assume financial guarantees. In view of my own friendship with Mr. van Cavwelaert and his family, the high regard which I have for him, and the services which he has indirectly rendered my country, my wife and I feel that anything we can do for them must be done.

I have sent you the appended telegram which is self-explanatory. I am sorry to burden you with this matter, but from the foregoing, you will realize how deep and well-founded is my interest.

With very good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Enclosure.
AIR MAIL

AMLEGATION
LISBON

(July 10, 1940)

Personal for the Minister:

Will appreciate your communicating through Belgian Legation with Franz van Cavwelaert important member Belgian Government now in Portugal and who is a very old and intimate friend of mine to effect that I will gladly do everything in my power to facilitate the admission of himself and members of his family to Cuba and eventually to the United States. I am sure that I can arrange for their admission to Cuba while they are awaiting visas for the United States. If he is in need of funds for transportation I shall be glad to make appropriate remittance. Letter follows.

Please telegraph any information my expense.

MESSERSMITH
AIR MAIL

Havana, Cuba,
July 10, 1940.

The Honorable
Franz van Cauwelaert,
c/o The Legation of Belgium,
Lisbon, Portugal.

My dear Friend:

Your two letters, of June 15th and June 26th, arrived by the same airmail. I need not tell you how much you and your family and your country have been in the minds of my wife and myself. I am not going to try to comment in any way on the developments of recent months as you know these so much better than I can know them at this distance. How profoundly these developments have affected my wife and me particularly as they affect your country and so many of our friends in Belgium, I need not tell you. I can only express the confidence which I feel that the independence and freedom of your country will eventually be reestablished. There are, however, difficult years ahead, and under the most favorable circumstances that we can foresee, the task which lies ahead of my country, and others, is hard. As to the ultimate outcome, I am confident.

May I tell you how much I admire your courage and the line of action which you have followed? You have shown yourself to be a true patriot and a man of fine sterling qualities which I always knew you to be. Your feelings, both with respect to your country and its people, and your cares with respect to your family I can readily understand. My one desire is to be helpful to you and your family in these circumstances in any way in my power, and I can assure you that all I can do personally, and all that it is in my power to do officially, I shall do to assist you.

I shall, therefore, in this letter not try to give my thoughts on all that has happened but confine myself to the immediate problem of the personal safety of yourself and family. I am glad that you and Mrs. van Cauwelaert and at least a part of the family are in Lisbon. I can realize that, even though there may be relative security there, you may wish to bring as many of your family as may be possible to this side of the water. One of the decisions which you will have to make will be whether you will remain yourself in Europe and send your family over here or whether you will also decide to
come with them. This is a decision in which I do not believe that I can give counsel, but one which you will make yourself. I only venture the opinion that, in spite of your great knowledge and your great patriotism, it is extremely doubtful whether you would be able to render any real service in the Government or life of your country if you were to return there now. Passions are running high and you are undoubtedly a marked man. The very qualities of statesmanship and courage which you have shown make it almost certain, and I believe certain, that as long as the German occupation of Belgium continues you would not be in a position to render any service there and may be in real personal danger. Under the circumstances you may feel the impulse to leave Europe with such members of your family as may be able to accompany you.

There are with you, as I understand it, your wife and daughter and one son, and I hope that the efforts which you have made to get your other sons out of France may have proved successful. In case you have not been successful in uniting the whole family, it would seem to me that your sons who may not have been able to join you would wish you and Mrs. van Cauwelaert, and those of the family who can leave, to do so.

In view of the developments in Europe, there are, of course, tens of thousands of persons desiring to proceed to the United States and other countries of the Western Hemisphere. So far as our country is concerned, the immigration laws, while they have not been changed, limit the admission of persons from abroad very specifically. It is increasingly difficult to secure a visa for a temporary stay in the United States, as in order to secure a visa for a temporary stay the alien must show that he has unquestionably an unrelinquished domicile to which he can return at the end of his temporary stay. This, in the case of yourself and your family, might be difficult to establish to our consular officer in Lisbon and he might find it difficult to grant visas for a temporary visit to the United States.

In order to secure a visa for a permanent stay in the United States, the law lays down certain conditions, and the greatest difficulty is that the law specifically restricts the number of persons of any origin who can enter the United States in a year. The demands on the Belgian quota, which up to recently were light, are now very heavy. Persons must register with the American Consul for an immigration visa and then must wait their turns on the waiting list of the quota until their application can be examined finally for a visa. I would therefore suggest that whatever your plans may be that you immediately register the names of yourself and the members of your family at the American Consulate General in Lisbon for immigration visas.
This will place you on the list of those awaiting visas under the Belgian quota for the United States.

As it may be difficult to secure immigration visas, or visitors' visas, for yourself and your family for the United States at this time without a long delay, you may wish to consider coming to Cuba, or to some other country contiguous to the United States. I am sure that this can be arranged and that you can await the final issue of the visas for the United States in a country contiguous to the United States. If, for example, you should wish to come to Cuba, which would be a good place to come, I am confident that the Cuban authorities could be persuaded to give the necessary instructions to the Cuban officials in Portugal to give you the necessary visas to proceed to Cuba. As there are many persons who desire to enter Cuba, the Cuban officials abroad must naturally find it difficult to grant visas. I must, of course, refrain from exercising any influence ordinarily to aid aliens in entering Cuba, but I consider that the case of yourself and your family is an entirely exceptional one, and you may be sure that I would use all my good offices with the Cuban Government here in order that its officials in Portugal may be instructed to grant you the visas for Cuba.

It occurs to me that it will be preferable for you to seek to come to this country - that is Cuba - rather than the United States, and await here your turn under the Belgian quota for visas. This, however, does not mean that you should not register the members of your family, and yourself, with the American Consul General in Lisbon for immigration visas for the United States.

My own personal means, as you know, are limited and I am not a rich man. On the other hand, my sentiments of friendship with you are so deep that my wife and I want you to know that we will be glad to be of any assistance to you in our power financially as well as otherwise. If, therefore, you should need any funds in order to secure passage for Cuba, or for the United States, you can let me know and I will see that the necessary funds are transmitted to you through our Legation in Lisbon.

I am writing to your Minister in Lisbon, Mr. Pell, to the effect that I count you as one of my oldest and dearest friends and that I wish to do everything to assist you. I would suggest that you go and see Mr. Pell, who I feel sure will be very glad to see you. I am sending this letter to you through him. The Consul General in Lisbon, Mr. Young, is also a very good friend of mine, and I would suggest that when you go to the Consulate General you ask to see him.

I am
I am sending a telegram today to our Minister in Lisbon, of which I enclose a copy. I shall await information from you and if there is anything that I can do you may be sure that it is my one desire to be helpful.

As to the future, should you and your family come to Cuba, or to the United States, I am sure that we will in some way be able to arrange for you to reestablish your existence and to find a field of usefulness. This is a matter which we can go into later and it is not of the most immediate importance. I have in this letter tried only to cover the immediate problem of your proceeding to Cuba, or to the United States.

My wife joins in every good wish to you and Mrs. van Cawelaert and the members of your family. As words are inadequate to express our feelings, I will not endeavor to do so. I can only subscribe myself as,

Always cordially and faithfully

Your friend,

GEORGE S. MESSERSMITH

Enclosure.

GSM:fm.
Dear Mr. Minister,

Mr. F. van Baumelaert left Portugal for France some fifteen days ago and I have your kind assurance that he is now in Vichy with the Belgian Government. His wife and children are staying at Monte Estoril (Vila Abreu Loureiro) near the Hotel S. Isidro.

I understand Mr. 

Van Baumelaert intends to return shortly to Lisbon and I shall not fail to let you know when he arrives.

Yours very sincerely,

[Signature]

Lugano, 18th July
Lisbon, Portugal
July 16, 1940

Francois Locken, Esq.
Belgian Legation
Lisbon

Dear Locken:

I have been asked by our Ambassador, Messer Smith, in Cuba, to get in touch with Franz von Gouwelaert.

I should be much obliged if you see him, if you would ask him to call me up.

I am,

Yours very sincerely,

Herbert Pell,
American Minister.
AMEMBASSY, Havana

July 10, 1940.

GRAY

July 11, 1940, 8 a.m.

Personal for the Minister.

Will appreciate your communicating through Belgian Legation with Franz van Cauwelaert important member Belgian Government now in Portugal, and who is a very and intimate friend of mine to effect that I will gladly do anything in my power to facilitate the admission of himself and members of his family to Cuba and eventually to the United States. I am sure that I can arrange for their admission to Cuba while they are awaiting visas for the United States. If he is in need of funds for transportation I shall be glad to make appropriate remittance. Letter follows.

Please telegraph any information my expense.

MESSERSMITH

Decoded: KOS

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