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Dear Andrew,

'Letters are therefore so precious in that these reflect the spur of the moment in life'
Goethe

It took me a while to clear up my brains to write you an entertaining letter. Hora est! The weather has changed to normal i.e. cloudy with now and then a spell of rain. We experienced an unusual sunny spring and summer so far. Days on end with temperatures over and above 20 degrees Celsius and no rain. Farmers are complaining about a lack of rain. Anyhow the bright weather did not prompt me to stay inside and write letters. Incidentally, why are you attempt not to become a columnist/commentator on the political events for a British journal or magazine. In my opinion you qualify. You graduated in 'humanoria' at Glasgow University and you are well versed to comment on public finance as well as on queer food/eating habits in the US. Oscar Wild coined the phrase that America developed straight from a barbaric status into a state of decadence, skipping civilization.

Andrew, you represent civilization, therefore you are pre-eminently qualified: firstly to opine on a society and on its people's behaviour so different from ours and secondly to magnify the anomalies.

Moreover, you have the writing skills. By becoming a free lance reporter (for instance, for the Economist) you would not be enslaved through employment of a corporation. Just send your comments (articles) on the state of mind of the nation (especially now that the primaries will be forthcoming) by email to the editor of the magazine, after you have made a deal that they pay you when they place your article. This consult is free of charge! However I would like to be copied, in order to keep abreast of the developments of your writing skills. I will divide the future in two: the days I receive a letter or email from you and the days I don't. As a final remark on your writing skills I will hand out for style and contents each: dix points!!

I have to tell you, Andrew, that hardly I have had the time to reflect on our trip to Indonesia. Since our return on June 8th life has been fragmented. Yes indeed, I am glad that I have had the time to put all the pictures, taken during the journey, in the right order in a photo album. This album will be important for the recollections of our odyssey in the East. By the way we did not find the West in the East. What we did find was the hospital in the village of Djatiroto on East Java where I was born. Also we visited the prisoner of war camp 'Banjoe Biroe', south of Semarang, where during three years hospitality was extended by the representatives of the Japanese Emperor to my mother and her two children. The first ten days we were the guests of the four brothers Nasoetion in Jakarta, Bogor and in Bandung. Their mother was a "van der Have" like my mother. She met her husband in the Netherlands where he read law and graduated at Leiden University. He wrote his doctoral thesis at Utrecht University. Then in 1946 he returned to the Dutch East Indies (later Indonesia) to join the nationalist forces of Soekarno. In 1948 he was captured by the Dutch special forces and summarily executed in a rice field. The soldiers probably thought they had captured the nationalist military leader with the same name who later became general Nasoetion. Last February the four brothers

Nasoetion were invited to the palace in Jakarta to receive from the President Megawati Sukarno Putri the highest Indonesian distinction. Posthumously given to their father in recognition of his role in the fight for the freedom of Indonesia.. I am very much interested in the life story of their mother. I took notes from her sons to be able to write a storey about her when I find the time.

A picture can tell more than a thousand words. I enclose a copy of photo's taken of elegant, bare breasted, Balinese women by my grandfather in 1936. My mother's parents travelled to Indonesia in 1936 to attend the wedding in Djember (nowadays spelled Jember) of their daughter Albertine to one Albert Dirkzwager. Thereafter they went to Bali. Looking at these pictures I cannot help thinking that the sexual connotation of a part of the body begins by covering it up with textile. Then the innocence gets lost.

There are many more recollections to be made about our trip to the East that I would like to share with you; may be later. I have not even commented on the food, but I tell you now: I adore Nasi Goreng for breakfast.

I am pleased to hear that your parents enjoy their old age. My father (88) too is still very bright and follows closely both national and international politics. Recently he wrote to the Queen with a request for her to consider not to attend 'the Four Freedom Award' ceremony. The next one will be held in Middelburg in 2004. The Democratic president Franklin D. Roosevelt predicated his policy upon four freedoms i.e. freedom of speech; freedom of want; freedom of religion and freedom of fear of war. The award was established to keep alive the spirit of President Roosevelt. My father felt that since the majority of the Democrats in the Senate wholeheartedly endorsed the Bush policy of unilateralism and did not conducted a proper opposition to the arrogance and lack of civility of the present US administration, the ceremony would be devalued to a meaningless charade.

It is amazing to see how both my parents in relatively good health, though physically fragile, entertain anyone, who come to see them, with an intelligent conversation and a glass of jenever or good wine. Weather permitting they spent a good deal of the day gardening. Right now they are going through a sad period. My brother Willem has left house and family and is at large. We don't know his whereabouts but in hindsight from the credit card debits on his account. Unfortunately he has taken the decision to stop taking his medicine against manic depression. He is spending money as if there is no to-morrow. He already bought a house, which we luckily could timely abort and a yacht. He is wandering around; sleeps in cheap hotels interchanged with the more classy but very expensive hotels like the Amstel Hotel and the Grand in Amsterdam. It takes up a lot of my time to assist my sister in law. I am her sounding board. Furthermore I inform and coordinate our stance within the family. On friday, 1st august a court sitting is scheduled to decide whether or not Willem will be forcefully admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

The other issue which makes great demands on my time refers to the fact that the foundation of the inner-city of Amsterdam has been built on wooden piles. This fact is so well known that even a Dutch nursery rime refers to this phenomenon:

Amsterdam, die grote stad is gebouwd op palen.
Als die stad eens ommeviel,
wie zou dat betalen?

This rime points out the problem, we have. Our neighbours, Keizersgracht 698/700, have to repair the foundation of their canal houses, because, after 300 years, their wooden piles cannot sustain the weight of the buildings any longer. It is also in our interest that their foundation will be shored up. The operation implies that 54 concrete piles will be driven into the ground to a depth of 21 meter (we call that the second sandlayer) The estimated cost of the repair job

for our neighbours is about €2 million. It is this type of money, we are talking about. The old (ours) wooden piles do not reach further than 14 meter (towards the first sand layer). Our house was built in A.D 1700. In those days you couldn't reach deeper. There are two mode's to get these piles in the ground under the house: 1) just driving the piles into the ground and then we fear cracks in our walls and 2) bringing water into a tube into which a pile is placed and then sucking the water up with sand whilst pushing the pile downwards. The danger then is that the contractor may suck up to much sand with the result that the thin sand layer, upon which our piles rest, will become unstable and that it will glide and move away from under our house. By Jove, I am becoming knowledgeable in the faculty of contracting in the city of Amsterdam.

Let me now comment on a couple of issues you brought to my attention in your letter. First of all the Jewish phenomenon. I believe that the Jewish religion imposes on their followers a strict regime of 'do's and don'ts'. You have to offer some of your personal freedom in order to be permitted to become a member of the community. Nowadays Christianity has slackened their grip on strict adherence of religious compliance. The Jews do intuitively feel that they have to be united in order head off the threat of the outside world. This kept them together since the Diaspora after the Roman emperor Vespasianus conquered Judea and ousted its inhabitants. What amazes me most is that the Jewish religion does not known missionaries to spread their gospel, because they alone were the chosen ones. Important Jews from the beginning of Christianity were Jesus himself and also Saulus/Paulus. They are the pillars of today's civilisation. As a general observation, I maintain, that one's mind requires the establishment of continuity with one's past. The successful black man in the US is still feeling displaced in America, because he is a descendant of a slave who has been forcefully transported from Africa to America. Similarly the assimilated Jew is still a Jew. So often the measure of success determines the measure of assimilations. Yes, Joe Libermann is an exception. Rolf eats a 'broodje ham'. All of them connect with their past and are proud of it. . And the other explanation of their excellence in a number of fields could well be explained by the fact that in Europe they were restricted in their choice for a job. For instance they could not become a civil servant and not join the army. They attempted to excel in the fields where they did not encounter any restrictions. Before the second world war it was 'bon ton' in the upper class in Europe to be anti-Semitic. I am grateful that this is not the case any longer. I hasten to write that I am disgusted that Bush allowed the free hand to the Israelis to destroy the Palestinians. Israelis are terrorists in uniform. By the way, what in fact is the definition of a terrorist? For many years the US administration has tagged the South African ANC movement and his visible member Mandela (imprisoned 17 years on Robben-island for terrorist activity) as terrorists and now they are a respectable political party. At Mandela's 85th birthday party 'tout le monde' gave 'acte de présence'. You are a somebody in this world if you were one of the 1600 invitees. Andrew, I missed you at the party! What about me?', I hear you thinking whilst reading these lines. I..., my friend, was represented by our queen and where was yours?

That brings me to topic of the terrorist Saddam Hussein. Is he a terrorist? What a gaffe to believe that Bush wishes to free the Iraqi people from a brutal dictator. If he is so moved by brutal dictators, why then doesn't he act to save the lives of the many ordinary citizen of Monrovia? Why all this crocodile rhetoric about the sufferings of the Iraqi people? The answer is OIL!! I enclose an excerpt of an interesting recent article from the New Yorker. It is about the Energy and national security. The control over Iraq is important in order to satisfy the continuation of the voracious energy consumption of the US citizens for the coming decades.

The toppling of the brutal dictator Saddam is, I read between the lines, is a pretext to get hold of the oil, notwithstanding the denial of Rumsfeld. Iraq is to become a kind of protectorate of the US. They are there to stay for many years to come.

The article in the magazine you send me about stereotypes (he names it 'dream palaces') is a very detestable form of rhetoric from a prejudiced spin-doctor who attempts to justify the mediocre presidency of mr G.W. Bush. The latter has not understood the role of the UN as the supranational council on morality to who's verdict all nation should adhere to. No country, according to international law, can meddle in the internal affairs of another country. Countries should respect each others sovereignty, is the axiom to maintain an stability among nations. Joey Average is one of the more than two million who have lost his job. The deficit spending is only second to Reagan. However Reagan's huge deficit had been imputed to the fact that he did refund 50% of the IT investments of corporations and as a consequence it translated into increased productivity, increased corporate profits and increased corporate tax returns. Don't believe, Andrew, that the US economy will improve on short notice!!! The underlying fundamentals such as the huge State debt, the huge trade deficit, the rising unemployment, the private -and corporate indebtedness have been already leveraged to an unacceptable high level. Together with the international political instability created by the Bush administration, it makes that the spent dollars abroad will not return to the US via the capital balance. The Dollar value vis à vis the Euro is then expected slide. Foreign investors will be less and less inclined to invest in the US. The consequence will be that the US treasury has to borrow from the market to fund their deficit. Interest will rise!!!

When the brilliant Albert Einstein died and arrived in Heaven, Petrus apologized whilst informing him that his room as yet was not ready. 'I do hope you don't mind sharing a room temporarily', said the butler of God. 'Do not bother, it is no problem at all', answered Einstein. 'Good', said the butler, 'let me then introduce you to your roommates. Well there is the first one who has an IQ of 180'. 'Splendid', observed Einstein, 'then we can discuss math problems together. The second roommate is introduced and he apologizes that his IQ is nor 100. 'Fine', says Einstein, 'we can talk about theatres and plays'. The third roommate welcomes Einstein in a very subdued manner and confesses that he has an IQ of no more than 80. Einstein gives him a broad smile and asks him: 'What do you think of future rates of the money market?' The moral of the anecdote is that both our scenario's are not as intelligent (IQ 80) as we pretended it to be.