

October 25, 1962

**Cable from Soviet ambassador to the US Dobrynin
to Soviet Foreign Ministry (2)**

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Summary:

Soviet Ambassador to the US, Anatoly Dobrynin reports to the Soviet Ministry on the political situation in Washington at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Dobrynin reports that US President John F. Kennedy has staked his reputation as a leader on a solution to the Cuban crisis and, as such, it is possible that he might take the gamble of invading Cuba.

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Cable from Soviet Ambassador to the USA A. Dobrynin to Soviet Foreign Ministry, 25 October 1962

The situation in Washington remains tense and complicated. At the same time, today in political and diplomatic circles and in the comments of American press, radio, and television, began appearing rays of hope for a peaceful settlement of the Cuban issue and they are related to the quiet, restrained behavior of the Soviet government and its readiness for negotiations with the USA (it is necessary to mention that the Embassy is receiving quite a number of cables and letters from ordinary Americans in which they express their gratitude to the Soviet government and N.S. Khrushchev for their position in the current situation).

Nevertheless, prevailing here are the expectations for further mounting of crisis in the relations between the USA and the USSR over Cuba. In addition to our previous considerations currently we would like to say the following:

1. It is becoming daily stronger the opinion that steps undertaken by the Kennedy administration regarding Cuba had been dictated by the desire to stop the generally unfavorable for the USA developments in the world and to try to reestablish the status-quo which had existed at the moment of the meeting between N.S. Khrushchev and Kennedy in Vienna last year. Risk, entailed with these steps made by Kennedy's administration, is outweighed, in his view, by those unfavorable consequences for the USA military-strategic situation, which would appear in the case of the placing in Cuba of Soviet medium and long-range missiles.

2. Regarding how far the Kennedy administration is ready to go against Cuba, the following impression has been forming.

Judging from available data, the administration sets itself, as a minimal aim, the object of not allowing the emplacement in Cuba the aforementioned missile launchers. Meanwhile, according to some sources, whose reports still need additional checking, the possibility is discussed--in case of not achieving that aim by other means--to destroy the missile launchers in Cuba under construction by a massive air-raid of American aviation. It is necessary to mention that, according to all reports, the Americans are not aware of exact numbers and kinds of our missile weapons in Cuba. This circumstance makes them rather nervous.

3. The most militant line in the USA administration still is held by [Attorney General] R. Kennedy, [Secretary of Defense Robert S.] McNamara, [National Security Adviser McGeorge] Bundy and military men, who insist on a firm approach with the purpose of destroying the missile bases in Cuba, not even stopping at invasion of the island. [Secretary of State Dean] Rusk and [Secretary of the Treasury Douglas] Dillon are now holding a somewhat restrained and more cautious position, though they also favor continued pressure upon us.

In this regard the course of the discussion inside the administration of the President's response to U Thant's appeal [of October 24; see above] seems significant. According to our information, the first group was insisting on a categorical rejection of that appeal. Such an answer had been already elaborated and it was even supposed to be transmitted to the largest information agencies. But at the last moment (around 12 o'clock midnight) the President inclined to the current, more flexible, [version] prepared by Rusk.

The President is vacillating right now, but, judging from everything, especially the principal direction of USA policy, he is heeding the first group, particularly, his

brother. A certain danger of the situation is that the President has largely engaged himself before the public opinion of America and not only America. In essence, he, as a hot-tempered gambler, has put at stake his reputation as a statesman and politician, and thus his prospects for re-election in 1964, what--being an ambitious man--he passionately seeks. This is why it is not possible to exclude completely the possibility that he can, especially taking into consideration his circle, undertake such an adventurist step as an invasion of Cuba.

4. Of course, it is difficult to draw a final conclusion whether there will be such an invasion or not. In the "war of nerves", which now is going on, the elements of disinformation, for sure, can play a role. In this regard it is necessary to mention that the USA administration has undertaken unusual measures of control over the press. In essence an unofficial censorship has been introduced in great measure. Immediate "conducting" [guidance--ed.] of the press on the part of the Kennedy administration has been strengthened. For example, according to confidential data, today Rusk has summoned the most important American journalists and told [them] that that the tendency [that has] just appeared in some papers to show some decrease of tension (in connection with the first Soviet tanker which has passed through the blockade) did not meet the requirements of the moment and the real state of affairs. The USA administration as before is fully resolved to achieve by "whatever means" the liquidation of the missile bases in Cuba,--underscoring Rusk. He also refuted several reports about USA readiness to "exchange" Soviet bases in Cuba for American bases in other countries, for example in Turkey (in this regard Rusk criticized today's article by [Walter] Lippmann).

5. Apparently, in order to force the atmosphere, there are transmitted (on radio, TV and through the press) reports from different states about bringing to full readiness the systems of civil defense, antinuclear shelters, about food and emergency purchases by the population.

Members of the diplomatic corps who in these days have visited other parts of the country, relate that at the beginning many people in those locations, especially in the western states, perceived Kennedy's speech of October 22 as a pre-election maneuver, but now the mood has changed. People, among them those who even not long ago were saying that it was "necessary to do something to Castro," now are badly frightened about what may be the outcome.

Noticeably fewer people can be seen on Washington streets. Government offices are working until late at night. Preoccupation over the possibility of a major war is sensed in business circles too, and it is reflected in sharp ups and downs of actions on the New York stock exchange.

African embassies warned their students at American universities to be ready for evacuation home.

6. In general it is necessary to say that different sources in the journalist and diplomatic corps in Washington agree that currently the probability of a USA armed intervention against Cuba is great. They consider that the Kennedy administration needs only a plausible excuse to "justify" such an action. In this regard it calls attention to the strong underlining (in the evening edition papers and radio transmissions) of the assertions as if in Cuba the construction of missile sites is rapidly proceeding.

The majority of sources agree that the nearest future days will be most critical, insofar as they consider that if the USA finds themselves [itself] involved in negotiations or diplomatic discussions of the whole issue, then it will be difficult to carry out an invasion because of political considerations. In this regard, as it is recognized nearly by everybody here, a very important role is played by the self-possessed and constructive position of the Soviet government, which is

restraining further broadening of the conflict, restraining the hottest heads in Washington.

25/X/62 A. DOBRYNIN