

October 24, 1962

Cable from the Chinese Embassy in Cuba, 'A Brief Report of Recent Activities in Cuba'

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Summary:

A report from the Chinese embassy in Cuba regarding the situation in Cuba. They report on: Castro's speech in response to Kennedy's statement from 22 October, and the Chinese embassy praises Castro; the economic situation in Cuba, including businesses, gas stations and hospitals; and the fact that the Cuban government has told United Arab Airlines and Holland Airlines that they can no longer land passenger aircraft in Cuba.

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Foreign Ministry:

Prime Minister Fidel Castro made a speech which was broadcast nation-wide by television. In his speech, he criticized [John] Kennedy's statement published the day before yesterday and rejected unreasonable demands from the US on issues such as the so-called aggressive weaponry and defensive weaponry, disarmament, enquiries into Cuba by UN-assigned delegates, his attitude was clear and resolute. He expressed firmly that [Cuba] will resist a comprehensive embargo from the US and a direct American invasion. At the end of his speech, he touched on the statement issued by the Soviet Union; instead of stressing Soviet support, he emphasized that the Cubans knew how to defend their motherland. Cuban people responded, "Fidel's speech is brave. Cuban people are surely brave."

Fidel spoke with dignity and calmness, instead of appearing agitated as he used to be. On the other hand, he seemingly also spoke with a heavy heart, as his facial expression couldn't help betray his fatigue. The present audience, including the President, members of the United Revolutionary Leadership Committee, and the Interior Minister, all wore arms. Raúl [Modesto Castro] and [Ernesto Che] Guevara were absent. Within the Leadership Committee, the deputy Defense Minister, the commander of the west military region, the Labor Minister (also as the commander of Civil Defense), too, were absent. Presumably they were all in their war positions.

Following the Soviet Union issuing their statement yesterday afternoon, [the newspaper] Hoy [Today] produced a supplement and the TV station also broadcast [the statement] several times. But, the Cuban people's reaction wasn't quite welcoming. One journalist from the Latin American Press Association told me, "the Soviet statement isn't quite what I expected." Some Havana University students even commented, "this statement is very bad"; [they] indicated that they were very unhappy [with it].

Havana is the same as usual. Gas stations are restored to normality but there is less traffic and fewer pedestrians than before. Businesses operate as usual, with no sign of panic buying. In the downtown, propaganda squads, filled by female militias, work with a high spirit. The mobilization of the masses remains ongoing. Outpatient services have already been suspended by hospitals, and patients with minor illnesses have been sent back to their homes. In line with Guevara's instruction, every mine is still working, trying to answer the call to "continue and improve production." Our oil prospecting group is also working. Quite a few students, from the engineer training class offered by our technical staff here, have enlisted themselves, but the rest keep studying. On the whole, the people are calm, and there is confidence towards the revolutionary government and Castro.

An American warship was reported early this morning to have been seen off the Havana coast. A cargo ship was expected to arrive this morning but it has not arrived even this afternoon. The Cuban revolutionary government has informed two airlines, the United Arab Airlines [Alian] and Holland Airlines [i.e., KLM Royal Dutch Airlines], that no passenger plane shall land in Cuban airports, until a new notice [to be given from Cuban government]. However, Czechoslovakia and Cuba are still connected by an airline.

Special report.

[Chinese] Embassy in Cuba
24 October 1962