

October 29, 1962

Cable no. 333 from the Czechoslovak Embassy in Havana (Pavlíček)

Citation:

"Cable no. 333 from the Czechoslovak Embassy in Havana (Pavlíček)", October 29, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archive, Archive of the CC CPCz, (Prague); File: "Antonín Novotný, Kuba," Box 122.
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Summary:

Pavlicek informs Prague that negotiations have proceeded with some progress, while there is still a tense aura in the air. An invasion of Cuba by the United States is now an unlikely prospect, given American failures to penetrate Cuban airspace, the quick organized response of the Cuban armed forces, and the widespread support Cuba receives from the socialist countries of the world. Pavlicek promises the Czechoslovak government that the embassy will make all necessary provisions to providing information on the ongoing negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Czech

Contents:

Translation - English

Telegram from Havana File # 11134

Arrived: 29.10.62 17:45

Processed: 29.10.62 20:00 Office of the President, G, Ku, 6

Dispatched: 30.10.62 06:30

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Other events gradually took place during 27 October which further dramatized the tense state of affairs; but on the other hand, in our view, these events clarified the position to such a degree that an invasion by the USA can scarcely be expected, and we can instead hope that the entire problem will be resolved through negotiations. Most important was [Soviet Premier Nikita S.] Khrushchev's message to [US President John F.] Kennedy which was replied to in a significantly different tone in the afternoon hours, as well as the exchange of messages between [UN Secretary-General] U Thant and Fidel [Castro] which promises that U Thant will travel to Havana. A binding factor can certainly be the fact that during the morning hours of 27 October the USA "tried," with embarrassing results, [to penetrate] the defenses of Cuba and thus a U-2 [reconnaissance plane] was shot down, and according to about 600 Cubans and friends, after gunfire and a quick attack, a US bomber unit from Pinar del Rio was also lost. The kind of panic these events caused can easily be imagined by the fact that the plane did not return to its base and could be regarded as lost, while [US Secretary of Defense Robert] McNamara did not admit that it had been shot down until the late hours of the night. The opinion of the Cuban people and their friends is that the current aggressive act of the USA was unleashed to unimaginable proportions of propaganda and was an act of camouflage, supported by constant threats of attack which were meant to break Cuba's defenses and probably to try to blackmail the USSR into backing down. Thus far, events have unfolded in the exact opposite manner and are only another confirmation of the failure of the Pentagon and the CIA. The internal situation has not seen any changes. The dignified, orderly, and quick mobilization, and above all the calm nature of the Cubans surprised not only all our friends, but above all the foreigners residing here. There is commentary to the effect that a similar calm, decisiveness, and courage should possess our Cuban friends in the area of working results. The results would be impressive. The entire country lives in a state of preparedness, awaiting a US attack which would for them end in catastrophe. Provocateurs appear only sporadically, their work having an immediately guaranteed effect. There is no sign of the USA's wish for an organized internal opposition. All tasks of civil defense, medical services, and others are fulfilled in accordance with Cuban possibilities and organizational capabilities. Battle plans with the Soviet friends are being fulfilled faithfully under very unfavorable conditions--strong winds and continual heavy rains and cool weather. Khrushchev's suggestions are understood and received well, with explanations and commentaries in the press, radio, and television. Expressions of solidarity from our countries and the entire world strengthen the fighting spirit of the Cubans and solidify the unity around the KRV [Cuban Revolutionary Front]. It is a great mistake that the Cubans do not inform the embassies of the socialist camp countries about the course of events and the internal measures. We are in close touch with Cubans at the highest levels, as well as with the Soviet friends and we inform the Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Romanian, and partially the [East] German and [North] Vietnamese embassies, as they requested us to do so. All others in contact with the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs work quietly in their posts; they are regularly informed of the situation by the embassy and are given directions in emergency situations. It is an unforgivable mistake to send more groups of tourists and women with children to visit our experts. Here we cannot understand that such groups are still being sent off under such dramatic circumstances; they certainly add to the embassy's problems. I ask for an energetic removal of these groups from further trips. If resorts are fulfilling the necessary quotas or rather we are dealing with paid trips without regard for a dangerous situation, this stance deserves criticism and should be stopped. Regardless, the embassy is arranging contact with all and providing information about the situation.

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