

October 31, 1962

Cable no. 338 from the Czechoslovak Embassy in Havana (Pavlíček)

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Summary:

Pavlicek reports to Prague that the public situation in Cuba is still uncertain and confused. Castro is expected to give a speech the coming Thursday which would resolve the situation and clarify the position of the Soviet Union. There is a lack of depth in evaluation, and much needs to be explained to the Cuban population by the Soviet Union, as all fear aggressive action by the United States.

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IMMEDIATELY!

The mood of the general population continues to be in a state of considerable confusion regarding the problem of dismantling. The situation is worsened by the difference of opinion among the mid-level staff, which echoes in the masses. According to the discussion with [Soviet Ambassador Aleksandr] Alekseev, [Cuban leader] Fidel [Castro] understood the situation exactly, but he has to lead politically unstable and doubtful elements in their relationship to the Soviet Union. From this perspective, clarity is expected in his speech to be given on Thursday. It has been illustrated, and the comrades understand how hard it is, especially now with an insufficient political party that is substituted by a very important unit around Fidel and his decision-making. We get our information from conversations with friends and some higher and middle functioning staff, because those highest around Alekseev are not within reach. The President [Dorticos], Fidel, Carlos and Rodriguez are in Havana, Raúl [Castro] in the east, and [Ernesto "Che"] Guevara in Pinar. Unfortunately, neither ORI [Integrated Revolutionary Organizations] nor any of the information services are clarifying the steps being taken by the Soviet Union. Things are evaluated on the surface level, in keeping with Cuban temperaments, and there is no lack of comment about another Congo, abandonment, the defense of Cuba, etc. Quick meetings called by ORI are not very effective. The categorical focus is on the fulfillment of Fidel's 5 Points, and thus the tense waiting for the meeting with [UN Secretary General] U Thant. All the while it is clear to Fidel himself that the maximum request for the liquidation of Guantanamo is unacceptable to [US President John F.] Kennedy. The mood has had a depressing effect on the Soviet friends, and while they are convinced there will be a positive ending, they are stunned and surprised by the Cuban reaction. According to some officials it will be necessary to explain much to the Cubans. Otherwise the internal situation has not undergone a change with regard to resoluteness, preparedness, and security, apart from the above-mentioned confused discussions. The latest information indicates that the situation is beginning to improve. On the other hand, supplies of food and fuel are decreasing and could be seriously threatened during prolonged negotiations. The total supply of vital products is estimated as being enough for only 3 weeks. Some Cuban officials expect that once the USA realizes the extent of the situation, they will prolong the negotiations in order to cause the most disruption. Security forces liquidate individual provocateurs quickly and effectively so this kind of activity is minimal throughout the country and absolutely unorganized-and thus has brought a deep sense of disappointment to the USA. If possible, we will try to learn some of the results of the talks with U Thant. The predominant opinion is that despite favorable commentaries and prospects about the negotiations, it is not possible to expect any improvement in relations between the USA and Cuba; in the event of a "guarantee," the dangerous situation will be postponed, not resolved.

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