

November 8, 1962
Telegram from Chilean Embassy in Rio de Janeiro
(Ruiz Solar)

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Summary:

Ruiz Solar discusses in a telegram his opinions on the failed attempts of "Brazilian mediation" of the Cuban crisis.

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Beginning and end of
Brazil's "mediation" in the Caribbean
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Minister:

The whole big display of publicity, classified by one commentator as diplomatic pyrotechnics, with regards to the so-called "mediation" of Brazil in the Caribbean crisis, has had fleeting existence.

The personal representative that President [João] Goulart sent to Havana to "act at the same time with the United Nations Secretary General [U Thant] and with Fidel Castro himself" has returned very discreetly, trying to explain that his action was the result of the "opportunity that presented itself, but that - given the international situation - [we lacked] the background information on Brazilian diplomacy that it [is] the custom to examine in crisis moments." With those expressions, General Albino Silva makes an unquestionable reference to the surprise that the announcement of his trip received, even though within government circles, efforts to send some experienced diplomat to Havana for this type of negotiations were already known beforehand .

In his desire to define the reach of his effort more precisely, General Albino [Silva] has officially explained that "the exact meaning of the mission carried out by Brazil in Havana was to move the problem of military action into the sphere of the United Nations." He added that in order to avoid his action having the character of mediation, he had separate conversations with U Thant, Fidel Castro, and [Cuban] Foreign Minister Raul Roa and that, thanks to the idea that exists with respect to Brazil, due to the coherence of its attitudes in the international organizations defending principles and not systems, the reception of its action by Cuba and by the Secretary General of the UN was made a lot easier.

His satisfaction at the accomplished work was illustrated by the humorous remark he made when he arrived [saying] that he brought "the World Cup of Diplomacy," adding that "he came very impressed with U Thant, who heard me lecture for one hour without even blinking or saying anything, with an impassivity to be expected of an oriental."

The apparent frivolity of this oficio [report] is born of the lack of importance that the return of President Goulart's personal representative has had, following the rousing announcements by the press about the Brazilian action to save world peace. Moreover, as one can gather from the editorial from the "Estado de Sao Paulo," one of the most prestigious journals in Brazil, the fact that the intervention of General Albino did not achieve the impact that was expected is not being hidden. This editorial contains the following:

"Brazilians should reflect before forming an opinion about facts that have been built up around the Government's action in relation to the international crisis provoked by the Cuban case.

We understand the unease with which the readers of newspapers are made aware, upon opening the pages of their preferred newspaper, to keep up to date with the news, of actions and official expressions which in all honesty the [several words illegible-trans.] to its sisters of the Continent, but that it perseveres in acting against the legitimate and general interests of the Hemisphere.

The political primacy of the improvised governors responsible for the awkward position in which Brazil was placed in that encounter is not denied. The verbal intemperance of the Prime Minister [Hermes Lima] in affronting the national conscience with expressions that run contrary to traditional beliefs of the country is not debated. Even less is the insufficiency unacknowledged, of those that, in the circumstances, thought to assume the direction of Brazilian diplomacy and extend the definition of our international political diplomacy precisely at the moment when facts served to undermine their assurances and prove their obvious unimportance. That - political primacy, the verbal intemperance, the insufficiency - is what in the first place clashes with the sensibility of those who are made aware of such a lamentable path of events. This is already a lot, but at the same time it still falls short of explaining the enormity of the 'gaffe' made by the Brazilian Government, taking [an] initiative without anyone asking it to and without any prior consultation with anyone, of proposing 'mediation' with Fidel Castro, in the reaffirmation of the curious doctrine of the self-determination of dictators [so that they can] bloodily enslave the people - with the goal of solving a conflict between the United States and Russia: The whole world smiled at such a provincial presumption. However, in official declarations that represent a humorous spark in an uneasy international moment, the President of the Republic declared himself to be euphoric and proud of the success in Havana, of General Albino [Silva], his special envoy, in the efficient leveling of the terrain for the salvation of world peace, giving pause to two formidable giants in dispute."

Another important and circulated publication, "O Globo," comments on the mission in the following terms:

"All the movement of our diplomacy, if we consider a call by [Yugoslav leader] Marshal [Josip Broz] Tito that was made to Brazil, when a circular went out to all countries that claim to be 'neutral,' seemed without content. If we went to ask for the dismantling of the nuclear bases that Russia had already agreed to withdraw, we went through an open door.

From that simple withdrawal one cannot deduce that Cuba will reintegrate itself within the democratic coexistence of the Continent. This would only result from a consultation with the people - similar to what the President of the Republic wants to do - as to whether it accepts or rejects Castro's regime. Since this one [Castro] does not admit international organizations' scrutiny even over the withdrawal of the nuclear bases, he will surely reject an identical evaluation process over a possible plebiscite ...

Therefore, 'what did we go to do in Cuba, with a special emissary of the President of the Republic?'

Nothing.

It was not worth the effort that Itamaraty prepared itself for angrily, launching a discharge as occurs after a great diplomatic feat in war or in peace...

Pyrotechnic diplomacy, to fool the idiots. That is what we have done in this entire episode."

* * * *

Be what they may, the commentaries about "Brazilian mediation to save world peace," objective or exaggerated, the truth is that General Albino Silva's trip to Havana has had a silent official epilogue, born out of the laconic communiqué delivered after the representative gave [his] account of his mission: "The President of the Republic and the Prime Minister received General Albino Silva returning from Havana. The Head of the Military Office ["Casa Militar"] of the Presidency reported on the conversations in that capital with the Head of the Cuban Government and with the Secretary General of the United Nations. The Brazilian government trusts that the serious situation that concerns us all will find a solution in the realm of the UN. The international organization, where all the parties directly interested are gathered, has all the elements to bring about the negotiations that are deemed indispensable on good terms."

God save you.

Marcelo Ruiz Solar
Ambassador of Chile