

## **November 1, 1962**

# **Brazilian Embassy in Washington, Analysis of the Cuban Missile Crisis**

### **Citation:**

"Brazilian Embassy in Washington, Analysis of the Cuban Missile Crisis", November 1, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Maço "600.(24h)—SITUAÇÃO POLITICA—CUBA de novembro a dezembro de 1,962//6223," Ministry of External Relations Archives, Brasília, Brazil. Translated from Portuguese by James G. Hershberg.  
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115316>

### **Summary:**

Campos sends an attached memorandum of analysis of the developments of the Cuban crisis, elaborated by the Political Sector of the Embassy. It discusses Soviet motivation, American actions, Soviet reactions, etc.

### **Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

### **Original Language:**

Portuguese

### **Contents:**

Translation - English

Washington, 1 November 1962

CONFIDENCIAL

Analysis of the Cuban Crisis.

600.(24h)

Mister Minister,

I have the honor of sending to Your Excellency the attached memorandum of analysis of the developments of the Cuban crisis until the 30th of last October, elaborated by the Political Sector of the Embassy.

2. As Your Excellency may verify, the work in regard is composed of an introductory episodal retrospective and of a rigorous analysis, for which permit me to solicit the attention of the Secretary of State.

I take advantage of the opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the protests of my esteem and my distinct consideration.

[signed]

Roberto de Oliveira Campos  
Ambassador

To His Excellency Senior Professor Hermes Lima,  
Minister of State of External Relations

LVP/zw

CONFIDENTIAL

Analysis of the Cuban crisis.

I - Retrospective

Chronological picture of the events that led President Kennedy to change his attitude in the face of the Cuban problem:

8 August - the press published that more than 4,000 Russian soldiers have arrived in Cuba. The administration said it did not have any information in this respect.

22 August - President Kennedy declared that he had information of the arrival in Cuba of technical equipment; but, in addition, he did not know for certain about the arrival of soldiers.

24 August - American government sources, not identified, declared that 20 cargo ships and an unknown number of passenger ships have, since July, transported technicians and equipment to Cuba. On the same day, President Kennedy declared that "we do not have any evidence of the arrival of troops in Cuba. I believe it would be an error to invade Cuba. We do not have at our disposal complete information about what is happening in that country."

31 August - Senator Keating affirmed that he had certain information that 1,200 men, dressed in the uniform of the Soviet army, have disembarked in Cuba, during the month of August.

1 September - The Soviet Union announced that it has decided to supply arms and specialists to Cuba, in order that this country possesses power to face "the threats of invasion." Senators Keating and Thummond [sic-Thurmond] advocate the invasion of the island.

4 September - President Kennedy declares that Russia is supplying missiles to Cuba. However, he said, they do not have evidence that these are of an offensive character. If, subsequently, it is verified that they are of such character, the administration will consider the adoption of pertinent measures.

7 September - The President asked Congress for authorization to call up 150,000 reserves, due to the international situation, "principally in Berlin."

11 September - The Tass Agency gave publicity to a communication in which the Soviet Union declared that it would retaliate with nuclear arms to any attack of the United States on Cuba or Soviet ships, sailing toward that island. It was added that the government of the Soviet Union would discuss the problem of Berlin after the American elections.

13 September - Kennedy said: "We are watching carefully the shipments of arms being done by the Soviet Union. The last shipments do not constitute a threat on any part of the hemisphere. A unilateral military intervention would not be justified." He criticized what he described as "irresponsible conversation" about invasion.

18 September - Ex-Vice-President [Richard M.] Nixon called for a "quarantine" of Cuba.

26 September - Congress approved a resolution authorizing the administration to use force, if necessary.

2 October - President Kennedy declared to the Ministers of External Relations of Latin American countries, meeting in Washington: "that we have to act to avoid the exportation, to the other countries of the Hemisphere, of Cuban communism."

10 October - The Administration revealed that it is elaborating its project for an economic blockade of Cuba. On the same day, Senator Keating said: "according to trustworthy confidential information that I have just received, there are being constructed, in Cuba, six ramps for launching rockets capable of carrying nuclear warheads, which can reach the Panama Canal."

13 October - President Kennedy, speaking in Indianapolis, spoke [verbera] against the "self-appointed generals and admirals who want to send someone else's sons to war" (sic) (published in the "Wall Street Journal"-24/X/62).

15 October - Secretary of Defense [Robert S.] McNamara examined the latest aerial photographs of the rocket launching ramps, under construction in Cuba, some of which had aroused suspicion.

16 October - President Kennedy ordered an intensification of aerial surveillance of the island.

18 October - President Kennedy received in the White House the minister of foreign affairs of the Soviet Union, [Andrei] Gromyko. He reiterated that the arms that were encountered in Cuba are of a defensive character. The president did not reveal to his interlocutor the information that he had in hand.

21 October - At 2:30 the President received information that missiles with a 1,000 [mile] range were in position of launching; platforms for launching missiles of 2,000 miles range, under construction.

22 October - President Kennedy called the party leaders urgently to Washington. He passes all the evening in conferences with Rusk, McNamara, [Martin] Hille[n]brand, etc. At mid-day it was announced that the President would speak to the nation at 7 that evening, about a matter of high urgency. Ambassador [Anatoly] Dobrynin was invited to the White House and gives him knowledge of the points which were covered in the speech and delivered to him a letter for Khrushchev. Following that the Latin American chiefs of mission were invited to the White House, at 19 hours [Kennedy] addressed the Nation announcing the existence of offensive nuclear armaments in Cuba.

22 October - In the face of this, he determined a severe maritime blockade of the island and announced the eventual adoption of "other measures," in case the referred-to bases are not dismantled. The crisis is reaching its "climax." The United States considers itself to be on the brink of war and waits anxiously for the Soviet reaction.

23 October - The Tass Agency described the American blockade as an act of piracy. The OAS approved the plan, presented by the United States, in the sense of avoiding by all means, including by use of force, which Cuba continues to receive armament from the Soviet Union. In the United Nations, Stevenson requested a withdrawal of the Russian bases from Cuba. Zorin called for the lifting of the blockade and proposed negotiations between the Soviet Union, the United States, and Cuba. The neutral countries did not show a disposition to support the American military action in Cuba and made pressure in the sense of realizing negotiations.

24 October - Responding to a telegram of Bertrand Russell, Khrushchev declared that his Government would not take any precipitous decision and suggested negotiations at a high level. Russian ships, transporting planes to Cuba would change course, avoiding thereby, for the moment, a confrontation with the American ships.

25 October - U Thant makes an appeal to Kennedy to lift the blockade, to Khrushchev to cease the sending of armament to Cuba and to Fidel Castro for an acceptance of negotiations. Khrushchev accepts the proposal of the Secretary-General and is ready to negotiate. Kennedy accepts, pointing out, however, that U Thant, in his appeal, did not mention the dismantling of the missile bases in Cuba.

26 October - U Thant received promises, from the United States and from Russia, of avoiding incidents with their respective ships. The White House declared that the construction of the bases, in Cuba, continues at an accelerated pace. Khrushchev sends a letter to Kennedy, whose text still has not been divulged. Dean Rusk referred to it as confused, making one think of internal difficulties inside the Kremlin. Kennedy said that the referred letter contained the following proposal:

The Soviet Union agrees to withdraw its missile bases from Cuba, under inspection of the United Nations, and will not send more warlike material to Fidel Castro;

The United States will lift the blockade and will give guarantees that Cuba will not be invaded, either by the United States, or by Latin-American countries.

27 October - A second letter of Khrushchev appears more firm. It offers to withdraw their bases in Cuba if the United States agrees to proceed in the same form in relation to its bases in Turkey. The White House declares that, before any negotiations, it is necessary to stop the construction of the Soviet bases in Cuba and render inoperative the ones that exist [porventura existentes]. It gives publicity to the text of the letter of Kennedy to Khrushchev, responding to the two of his. Kennedy set out the following line:

Russia should dismantle its bases in Cuba under inspection of the United Nations and suspends the sending of armaments to that country;

The United States agrees to lift the blockade and to give guarantees that Cuba will not be invaded.

28 October - The text of Khrushchev's third letter to Kennedy is published. It announced that it has ordered the dismantling of the bases and the re-embarking of the same with the destination the Soviet Union.

29 October - Fidel Castro demands the return of Guantanamo as a basis for negotiations. The observation flights of the American planes continue over Cuba.

30 October - U Thant visits to Cuba in order to verify the dismantling of the Soviet bases. As a gesture of courtesy, Kennedy orders the lifting of the blockade during the stay of the Secretary General of the United Nations in Cuba.

## II - Soviet Motivation

An analysis of the events seems to reveal that the Soviet motivation has been as follows:

The creation of an atomic offensive capacity in Cuba, before the American elections of 6 November, with the objective augmenting its ability to bargain with the United States in future crises of negotiations over Berlin and American bases in Europe, Africa and Asia;

the alteration, in favor of the Soviet Union, of the equilibrium of forces in the Western Hemisphere;

the creation of a capability of atomic retaliation against the United States, on the part as well of the Cubans, in case of an American invasion or [an invasion] by refugees;

the possibility of atomic "blackmail" in Latin America, with a view to favor communist infiltration.

Probably, it was assumed in this plan:

that the United States would not prove the installation of offensive capacity, before it was finished;

that the American government would not react drastically, in case of proof, in view:

of the proximity of the elections;

of world public opinion

of the previous behavior of the United States in other crises;

of the disagreements in Latin America.

that, if the United States reacted drastically, the North American government would lead a direct attack against Cuba, in case of which, in spite of taking the risk of losing Cuba, the Soviet Union would gain:

the loss of prestige of the United States that appears in the eyes of the world as an aggressor nation;

a definitive break in the unity of the Americas, since the United States would be against a [sigmande] part of the governors and the public opinion of the Latin American countries;

the possibility of a split, other than in our governments, at least in the public opinion of the countries of Western Europe;

the possibility of adopting parallel measures in other areas of tension, notably Turkey, Iran or Southeast Asia, otherwise Berlin.

### III - American Action

□ In place of inaction or intemperate action, the North-American government:

fixed the basic principle that any nuclear attack on the part of Cuba on any nation of the Western Hemisphere would be considered an aggression of the Soviet Union on the United States and, as such, the Soviet Union would receive full retaliation (this principle is already being called "the Kennedy corollary of the Monroe Doctrine").

Established two imperative conditions:

cessation of supply of offensive material;

dismantling of the offensive installations that already exist;

to force the realization of the first condition:

it obtained the unanimous support of the OAS

it imposed a partial blockade, as an "initial measure;"

to realize the second condition it:

it obtained the support of the OAS

it made political and military preparations for direct action against Cuba ;

simultaneously, it raised the question to the UN, leaving the door open to negotiations.

#### IV - Soviet Reaction

□The Soviet reaction to the American action seems to demonstrate the disorientation of the Moscow government, probably determined:

by the evident error of calculation how much the American action in itself;

by the "escalation" or "graduation" of the American action (partial blockade, possibility of negotiations, eventual direct action - and no immediate attack)

by possible disagreements within the Kremlin;

by possible disagreements within the Soviet bloc, especially with China;

The Soviet disorientation seemed to be demonstrated:

by the Soviet note of 23 October, clearly "interlocutorial;"

by the sudden return of Gromyko to Moscow;

by the rapid succession of different Soviet proposals and suggestions for a peaceful solution;

by the acceptance of the two conditions of Kennedy in a relatively short time;

in brief, by the lack of an immediate alternative plan: the Soviet initiatives became movements of adaptation.

The Soviet movement of adaptation seems to obey the following rationale:

There were no vital interests of the Soviet Union at stake in the Caribbean;

it does not have, therefore, reason to risk a nuclear war;

it does not meet the interests of Soviet expansion to have a war with the United States;

accepting the two conditions of Kennedy, it kept the United States impeded from the undertaking of direct military action against Cuba, that would destroy Castro;

it conserved Castro as a "political base" in the Americas, keeping a "spot on the flank" of the United States;

the Soviet Union could capitalize on its "pacific action" and its bargaining position, although diminished.

#### V - Current Balance of Positions

If the dismantling of the offensive bases in Cuba is to be confirmed, in exchange for a non-invasion commitment on the part of the United States, it will lead to [ter-se-ia], broadly [grosso-modo], the following balance of positions:

#### I - The United States:

has neutralized, in the strategic plan of the cold war, a tactical advantage of the Soviet Union in the Western Hemisphere;

has, in the first place, secured the unity of opinion of Latin America with relation to the danger of Soviet penetration in the continent;

has shown to Latin America that Cuba is not only a socialism of nationalist source, acceptable, as Rusk in Punta del Este, as an economic regime, but also an internationalist sectarian socialism;

in the Afro-Asian and neutralist world, if it did not have political gains, at least not did suffer a substantial loss;

with relation to its NATO allies, has increased its prestige and proved its determination to face the Soviet Union on these points on which it has vital interests at stake;

not having destroyed the Castro regime, will continue suffering the pressures of Cuban refugees;

on the plane of internal politics, the Democratic administration will come off, gaining prestige, with positive consequences in the elections of 6 November.

#### II - The Soviet Union

will capitalize on the withdrawal of its bases in Cuba as an attitude for the salvation of world peace;

has introduced the problem of Cuba definitively in the general sphere of the cold war, making it more clear that it is no longer controversial, that is, that the United States is not able to obtain a unilateral solution of the problem;

has dramatized the problem of bases in foreign territory, provoking, even in the North American press, a strong current against the existence of bases (obsolete) in Turkey;

formalized the American guarantee of non-aggression toward Cuba, assuring, at least temporarily, the existence of a socialist regime in the Americas;

has spent, only in operations, US \$.....1,000,000 per day from July onwards, which, adding up the expense and wear and tear of material and the cost of return transport, able to make any political advantage very onerous in terms of economic costs;

has suffered a great political stress and strain in the communist area, principally in relations with China; the satellites of Europe and China, beyond the natural resentment for not possessing the more modern arms that exist[ed] in Cuba, considering the Soviet climb-down as a demonstration of weakness in the communist bloc before the United States;

has suffered a loss of prestige in non-radical sectors of the left in Latin America.



□

### III - Fidel Castro

He will be the great loser of the whole crisis, if he does not get, as is almost certain, the major advantage, which would be the return of the Guantanamo base, since:

he will lose the mystique of the leader of a socialist revolution of a national character, passing to be a figure of the third plane in the United States-Soviet Union dispute;

he will run the risk of losing part of the Soviet economic help, in view of the heavy onus that the crisis represents for the Soviet Union and the high cost of maintenance that Cuba represents;

it will be proved that his regime, before being a socialist revolution aiming at nationalization and statization of the means of production, is, above all, a communism of a propagandistic and sectarian character, becoming confused with an instrument of foreign policy of the Soviet Union;

with the loss of the mystique of a hero of the national revolution, with the loss of prestige in the international sphere, with the aggravation of the economic crisis, he will run the risk of, if he does not counter with an adequate political mechanism and instruments of efficient propaganda, having to face with the recrudescence of the internal guerrilla war.

### VI - The Brazilian Position in the OAS and UN

I have in the view that the American action itself, that brings the problem of the aggravation of the Cuban crisis for the field of negotiations in the OAS and UN, that Brazil adopted, in these two organizations, measures that were able to call, in the first of these, for immediate consequence [alcance] and, in the second, for more long-term objectives. Such measures, although considering the modification that ...[advinha] in the Cuban problem as a consequence of the installation of offensive missile bases, were subordinate to the main directives of Brazilian foreign policy, which are the respect to commitments freely assumed, the defense of certain basic juridical postulates, and the objective of world peace.

#### Position in the OAS

Consistent with the position assumed in the Conference of Punta del Este and in compliance to the stipulations of the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil:

supported the resolution presented by the Delegation of the United States, in the sense of convening the Organ of Consultation, in agreement with the provisions in the Inter-American Treaty of Mutual Assistance, and authorizing the OAS Council to function, provisionally, in that quality;

defended the necessity of the Council to make a distinction between the measures the United States requested against Cuba, in other words, between:

defensive measures aimed to impede that Cuba continues to receive the potential Sino-Soviet armaments that can threaten the peace and the security of the Continent, that is, measures that are equivalent to the maritime blockade of offensive arms;

other measures to be taken in Cuban territories for impeding that offensive armament that exists can be converted into an active threat to the security of the

continent, any military action that the United States would want to take, including invasion;

c) voted favorably on the partial maritime blockade, but abstained from voting "other measures," in which it was accompanied by Mexico and Bolivia, making quite clear its position against measures of bombardment or invasion of Cuban territory.

#### Position in the UN

With the immediate objective of lessening the crisis in the Caribbean and, in the longer term, as part of its policy favoring progressive and controlled disarmament, with the freeing of funds for programs of assistance to the economic development of underdeveloped countries, Brazil presented, on 29 October, to the Political Committee of the General Assembly a draft resolution [handwritten: "(approved)"] in the sense of denuclearization of Latin America and Africa.

#### 3) Long-run consequences of the Brazilian position

The serene and firm attitude of Brazil in the OAS, abstaining from supporting more violent immediate measures against Fidel Castro, [handwritten inserted word illegible; "aimed"?] to contribute for alleviating the international tension (that in the UN it obtained with its denuclearization project), aimed to not alienate Cuba totally from the inter-American system, that would eventually permit, as soon as the currently exacerbated emotional climate ceases, a return to the position defended in Punta del Este, that is, the thesis that Cuba, neutralized and not infiltrationist, could coexist competitively with the representative democracies of the continent. Such a coexistence would be subordinate to the condition that Cuba (a) accepts a statute of negative obligations, with the effect of renouncing the techniques of subversive propaganda, infiltration, and sabotage, (b) abandoning its subservience to Soviet foreign policy and military interests (c) respecting the interests of continental security and the right of other countries of realizing their own political experiment.

#### VII - Appreciation of the Brazilian Attitude in the United States

□ Although part of public opinion and a portion of the Administration recognized the positive aspects of the Brazilian performance in the OAS and UN, certain sectors of the press and of Latin-American diplomatic hands in Washington commented unfavorably that:

Brazil still does not realize the existing difference between communism of national character and internal communism, sectarian, infiltrationist, and instrument of Soviet foreign policy and, [the danger] this last type of regime represents for countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, and Venezuela, through stimulation of internal agitation from leftist sources;

that Brazil, perhaps due to its geographic distance from Cuba, did not sense the disequilibrium of power in the hemisphere -and the consequent danger - that Fidel Castro in plain possession of atomic arms would certainly produce; and that any doctrinal orientation that would be encouraged, such disequilibrium will produce a strong reaction, at least in the Caribbean.

that the development of national communism not aggressive will be difficult to conceive of without a substitution of leadership, since Fidel Castro is so excessively involved with the Marxist-Leninist line and, by his previous attitudes, has aroused irreconcilable antagonism not only in the United States but in various areas of Latin America, making impossible the production of formulas of coexistence.

Washington, on 1 November 1962.