

1962

Amintore Fanfani Diaries (excepts)

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Summary:

The few excerpts about Cuba are a good example of the importance of the diaries: not only do they make clear Fanfani's sense of danger and his willingness to search for a peaceful solution of the crisis, but the bits about his exchanges with Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Carlo Russo, with the Italian Ambassador in London Pietro Quaroni, or with the USSR Presidium member Frol Kozlov, help frame the Italian position during the crisis in a broader context.

Credits:

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The Amintore Fanfani Diaries

22 October

Tonight at 20:45 [US Ambassador Frederick Reinhardt] delivers me a letter in which [US President] Kennedy announces that he must act with an embargo of strategic weapons against Cuba because he is threatened by missile bases. And he sends me two of the four parts of the speech which he will deliver at midnight [Rome time; 7 pm Washington time]. I reply to the ambassador wondering whether they may be falling into a trap which will have possible repercussions in Berlin and elsewhere. Nonetheless, caught by surprise, I decide to reply formally tomorrow.

I immediately called [President of the Republic Antonio] Segni in Sassari and [Foreign Minister Attilio] Piccioni in Brussels recommending prudence and peace for tomorrow's EEC [European Economic Community] meeting. I place a call to London and [British Prime Minister Harold] Macmillan says that he will send a message for me tomorrow.

23 October

The situation has generated great preoccupations. I call Segni on the phone and I advise him to get back [to Rome] within the day. I gather [Secretary of the Christian Democratic Party Aldo] Moro, [Secretary of the Social Democratic Party Giuseppe] Saragat, [Secretary of the Republican Party Oronzo] Reale, and I inform them, they approve the policy which I am going to present at the Senate and at the Chamber of Deputies tonight, after I have agreed upon the text of the declarations with Moro, [under-secretary for Foreign Affairs Carlo] Russo and the Chairmen of the Parliamentary Committees for foreign affairs.

I receive from Ambassador Ward a message from Macmillan, obviously critical of Kennedy's decision, and asking for an entente. I reply immediately suggesting an action for peace. I prepare my reply to Kennedy. I enjoin the PSI [Italian Socialist Party] not to associate themselves with the PCI [Italian Communist Party] and to take a moderate position, as it does afterwards under [Francesco] De Martino in the Chamber of Deputies but not under [Emilio] Lussu in the Senate.

I send Russo to New York with the task of trying to make the UN take the situation under its control and solve it peacefully.

24 October

At 9:30 I see Segni, who has come back from Sassari yesterday evening, and I inform him of the events by reading him Kennedy's message, Macmillan's [message], and my own replies. He approves them, suggesting some corrections in my reply to Kennedy, which I will deliver at 12 to the US ambassador—something I could not do yesterday evening as I had to chair the meeting on the shipping yards in Leghorn until midnight, after the meetings at the Parliament. I see Piccioni, back from Brussels.

I inform Saragat about both messages. Moro knew about them since yesterday.

The French Ambassador [Armand] Berard expressed to some friends his appreciation for the speech I gave yesterday, which on the contrary worried [Soviet Ambassador Andrej] Kozjrev. In Moscow, TASS too interpreted it as pro-US, criticizing it. The Italian press in general welcomed it. Moro was satisfied with it. I solved the problems of the aqueduct in Paola and of the shipyards in Leghorn. I gave instructions that tomorrow at the NATO meeting in Paris Italy should not associate itself with the US proposal to

suspend the supply of aid to the USSR, and to postpone the issue in order not to exacerbate East-West relations.

25 October

The Pope [John the XXIII] who has been informed about my activity for peace in the past days, lets me know about his satisfaction. At 11 am, at the Capitol, delivery of the Balzan Prize to the Nobel Foundation. Then at the Quirinale I talk with the King of Sweden, worried about the situation and critical of the Soviet decision about the blockade.

At 5 pm at Villa Madama reception of the Italian Episcopate. There are 22 cardinals and almost 400 bishops, most stressing their satisfaction at meeting the government which has honored them. How beautiful that this has crowned today's manifestations of peace, climaxing at noon with the Pope's radio speech in favor of negotiation at any level.

In the evening meeting with the ministers, about the hospitals. We conclude the project [draft] which we should approve. Piccioni has met both the US and the Soviet ambassadors, encouraging a peaceful resolution of the Cuban issue. Soviet newspapers attack the position of the Italian government.

26 October

Russo cables me that he has seen [US Ambassador to the UN Adlai E.] Stevenson. S. thanked him for what I said in Parliament and then he asked him what we would think about an exchange between a withdrawal of the missiles from Cuba and a withdrawal of the missiles from the European bases, particularly if [the latter are] obsolete. Russo said it would be preferable to use the dismantling of the European bases in the framework of the conclusion of the disarmament negotiations. The Brazilians instead are proposing denuclearization [of] South America and Africa. In the evening comes the news about a stiffening in the US position. I have a call made to the US and at half past midnight I learn that there was a stiffening in the morning but that now it's been reduced a bit. I have lunch at Segni's and I find there [Chairman of the Senate Cesare] Merzagora and [Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies Giovanni] Leone who are trying to paint a black picture of the economic situation. When I compare that with the serene report presented by [CEO of the Italian Commercial Bank Raffaele] Mattioli to the Commercial Bank on the 19th, they fall back, saying they certainly do not want to open a parliamentary crisis, knowing full well that "they would be the ones who would have to replace me," and this modest prophecy changes the tone of the conversation completely.

I receive an anonymous express message from Milan with the announcement from the [unreadable] of a death sentence for me and my family if I do not resign within 48 hours. I give a copy of it to [Chief of Italian Police Angelo] Vicari and [Commanding General of the Carabinieri Giovanni] De Lorenzo.

27 October

From New York Russo cables that he has seen U Thant, and I learn that Cuba would be willing to dismantle the missiles under UN control, if the US would publicly declare that they do not want to intervene in Cuba any longer, [as well as] to close down the camps for training the Cuban exiles under UN control. I see Piccioni and I ask him to cable Russo that he should go back to see U Thant encouraging him and supporting him in his conciliatory actions. I ask him to instruct [Italian Ambassador to Moscow Carlo Alberto] Straneo and [Italian Ambassador to Washington Sergio] Fenoaltea to meet respectively with [Soviet foreign minister Andrei] Gromyko and [US Secretary of State Dean] Rusk encouraging them to find a solution for Cuba. [Italian Ambassador in London Pietro] Quaroni does not overestimate the danger and agrees to stick to a

close Austro-Italian contact. He would suggest that, in case of necessity and if asked by the US, we might as well consider a trade-off of the dismantling of the bases in Cuba with the dismantling of the US missile bases in Europe. After half an hour I learn that Khrushchev has suggested to U Thant a trade-off for the Cuban bases as well as the Turkish ones.

At 8 pm, [Ministry of the Interior Paolo Emilio] Taviani informs of his fears about the airplane of [ENI President Enrico] Mattei, which has not arrived in Milan at 7 pm. I order the necessary search to be carried out and unfortunately at 9 pm we learn that the plane crashed in Bascapè near Linate. Everyone's dead, including Enrico Mattei.

28 October

I order that Mattei be given a state funeral. For fifteen years he has given the republic powerful tools of progress and he has honored Italy everywhere. I still cannot accept that he may be dead, this intrepid pioneer of progress. His widow, that I visited together with [Fanfani's wife] Bianca, is in the same mood.

In the morning an alert for an unforeseen meeting of the Atlantic Council. But then at 3 pm the news from Washington that the USSR is willing to remove the missile bases from Cuba since the US does not intend to attack Cuba has generated new hopes. I have informed Segni. Then I waited for a confirmation and at 6 pm I let the US and the Soviet ambassadors know that we look upon with favor to the news and that we encourage both countries to draw useful consequences for peaceful restoration of the situation.

[...]

11 December

Dinner at the Russian Embassy where I find Kozlov, who at 6 p.m. paid a visit to Segni. I had met him in Moscow and he is gracious enough as to tell me that I have left a great impression there. He tells me that he visited Pompei, and that the ruins have deeply impressed him, make him imagine what the world would have become if on the 28th [of October] a nuclear war over Cuba had broken out. He recognizes that only the wisdom of Kennedy and Khrushchev has saved us from the abyss, twice very close. Now he believes that an understanding can be achieved. Some say that the document for Kennedy about Cuba initially included also the request to withdraw the missile bases from Italy. Then during the discussion in the Soviet government the idea prevailed of respecting Italy on account of the memory of my visit [to the Soviet Union]. I reply that I was certain that they would not bring the Italian bases into the picture for [...] their discussion in a possible treaty between NATO and the Warsaw pact. He says it's a good argument.