

November 9, 1962

Cable from Dutch Embassy, Washington (Van Roijen), 9 November 1962

Citation:

"Cable from Dutch Embassy, Washington (Van Roijen), 9 November 1962", November 9, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archive, The Hague, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2.05.118, inv. 28913. Obtained for CWIHP by Rimko van der Maar and translated for CWIHP by Bastiaan Bouwman.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115563>

Summary:

Van Roijen cables from Washington about a conversation he had with British Ambassador to the United States David Ormsby-Gore. Ormsby-Gore explains the possible reaction from Moscow to the defeat suffered in the crisis as twofold: Those who are of the opinion that Khrushchev will make a countermove, while those whose judgment is that Khrushchev has finally understood that the Americans in fact are willing to fight for their vital national interests has learned severe lessons for future Soviet policy in the Cold War. Both van Roijen and Ormsby-Gore that perhaps the most decisive moment of the whole crisis was the American blockade of Cuba herself. The cable concludes with Ormsby-Gore addressing the possibilities of hidden missiles in Cuba, to which he claims aerial reconnaissance has not produced any evidence to support this.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Dutch

Contents:

Translation - English

REFERENCE No. 10705

DATE OF DISPATCH: 9 November 1962

DATE OF RECEIPT: 10 November 1962

TO: Min[ister]. o[f]. F[oreign].A[ffairs]

FROM: Washington

SECRET

Today I had a talk with my British colleague [UK Ambassador David Ormsby-Gore] from which I should like to mention briefly the following:

With regard to the question of how Moscow will react to the defeat suffered in the Cuba crisis, Ormsby-Gore currently distinguishes two tendencies: on the one hand those who are of the opinion that Khrushchev will, if only to restore his prestige, be compelled to make a powerful countermove; on the other hand those whose judgment is that Khrushchev has finally understood that the Americans in fact are willing to fight for their vital national interests, has drawn the necessary lessons from this and in his further cold war policy will proceed with the necessary prudence.

My colleague himself, and as he said his government as well, is inclined to believe that the Kremlin will not take any more major risks in the current circumstances and is more likely to operate in a circumspect fashion. "All straws in the wind seem to point that way." [In this regard it should be noted that [Llewellyn E.] Thompson, former ambassador of the US in Moscow and presently advisor for Soviet affairs of the secretary of state, today told one of my other Western European colleagues that he personally did not believe that Moscow will make a countermove in Berlin.] In the meantime Ormsby-Gore agreed with me that it was yet far too early to form a well-grounded opinion about this with any certainty [since in Moscow too a re-assessment is taking place] and that especially that NATO should be prepared for anything and take precautions for all eventualities.

My British colleague agreed with me that one of the most critical moments during the Cuba crisis had probably been the moment between the announcement of the quarantine measures against Cuba on Wednesday morning, the 24th of October and Thursday the 25th of October when it became clear that the Soviet ships had received orders to change their course. We had both established that at the time in government circles in Washington possible incidents involving Russian ships and which through a chain reaction could have led to a nuclear war were very seriously reckoned with.

During a recent meeting at the State Department, at which both Ormsby-Gore and our [West] German colleague [Karl-Heinrich] Knapstein had been present, the latter had made a passionate speech about the possibility that the Russians or Cubans would hide missiles and other weapons in the caverns of the island. The Brit had countered that aerial reconnaissance had so far not detected any suspicious activities or traces near the caverns and furthermore that it was not very probable that the Russians after having been caught red-handed and having been forced to retreat would now risk a second fiasco with the purpose of hiding a few weapons inadequate to truly threaten the US clandestinely.

Informant responded affirmatively to my question whether he was not also convinced that the US government would not compromise regarding her demands concerning the removal from Cuba of the Ilyushin-28 bombers and regarding the verification within Cuba itself.

Van Roijen 960.