

October 28, 1962

**Cable from USSR Ambassador to Cuba Alekseev to
Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Citation:

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Summary:

Alekseev transmits the details of a meeting with President Dorticos, who relays the feeling of the Cuban people regarding Soviet withdrawal of missiles.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Due to F. Castro's absence from Havana and according to his instructions, I gave both letters to President Dorticos.¹ In my presence Dorticos called Castro and informed him in a prearranged form that the letters had been received. Castro promised to meet me on his return.

Upon several statements and Dorticos' reaction to N.S. Khrushchev's letter to F. Castro and to the latest message to Kennedy about the dismantling of special weaponry it became clear that confusion and bewilderment are reigning inside the Cuban leadership.

Dorticos said that, unfortunately, Cuban and Latin American peoples would perceive the decision to dismantle the special weaponry, relying only upon Kennedy's assurances, as a defeat for the Soviet government.

He said that whatever assertions Kennedy made, the Cuban government could not weaken its vigilance.

We understand, declared Dorticos, that this decision of the Soviet government is directed to the preserving of peace and in the end it will be advantageous for the whole socialist camp, including Cuba, but under the present conditions of great patriotic enthusiasm of our people this report would be perceived by infinitely electrified masses as a cold shower.

He said that for the Cuban leaders the most important thing right now is to preserve the Soviet Union's prestige, which had been raised so high in Cuba.

According to him, the counterrevolution will immediately seize this opportunity and direct all its work to revive distrust toward the Soviet Union.

Here, said Dorticos, we must rise to the occasion in order to explain correctly to our people the meaning of the adopted decisions.

He declared that under the created circumstances the Cubans were obliged to publish a statement, differing in tone from N.S. Khrushchev's letter, and there was suggested a preliminary acceptance by the Americans of the five [Cuban] conditions, including evacuation of the Guantanamo base. (transmitted to TASS)

Besides, Dorticos explained, we found ourselves in a difficult situation insofar as we had officially declared that we would not allow any UN observers on our territory.

Until a certain time we will have to stick to this "maximum program" and seek ways of achieving an honorable agreement which could be reached only if we receive from the USA absolute guarantees of our security.

According to Dorticos, no Kennedy statements could be trusted inasmuch as even now the piratical flights over Cuban territory were occurring and this was done not without Kennedy's knowledge.

Dorticos considers that the Americans, probably, will not stop at our consent to dismantle bases of special weapons and will demand additional concessions, in particular, the withdrawal of all the [Soviet] military units.

He also showed concern about possible solution of the question of the remaining in Cuba of our military specialists and the defensive weapons at their disposal, attached for the defense of military objectives.

Dorticos didn't say it openly, but permitted me to understand that the Cubans were not happy with our decision [to remove the missiles under UN inspection] undertaken without previously consulting them.

I told them that the small delay [in providing] the letter [from Khrushchev to Kennedy] was due to merely technical reasons (enciphering, transmission, translation) and made the assumption that insofar as the Cuban comrades had several times informed Moscow about the inevitability of [U.S.] intervention and bombings, probably, some quick and operational actions were needed, so there was no time for coordinations. Dorticos agreed.

After my visit to Dorticos, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez came to see me (he was informed by Dorticos about the content of the letter from N.S. Khrushchev to Fidel Castro) and presented a dismal picture of incomprehension among the Cuban people and several leaders of our decision to dismantle the special installations.

He said that a lot of people think that all our specialists and their weapons would be withdrawn and they were taking it hard.

According to C.R. Rodriguez, F. Castro has also reacted very painfully regarding this decision--and not the content of the decision itself because he considered it to be advantageous for mankind and the Cuban people--but the procedure of its adoption--without a previous consultation.

Particularly, he said, Dorticos had a presentiment that Castro's dissatisfaction would be caused by the phrase that the text of the response to Kennedy was being transmitted by radio.

C.R. Rodriguez explained that F. Castro was defending our decision in conversations with the Cuban leaders, trying to convince them that its results would be seen later, but he had not yet found intelligible arguments for an electrified people. But the most important [thing] is that he skeptically regards Kennedy's assurances and is convinced that the Americans will go further and put forward new demands.

In my conversations with Dorticos and Rodriguez I said that, in my view, the decision on dismantling those installations did not interfere with Cuban defensive interests. It will not only save universal peace and ensure its strengthening, but this decision of the Soviet Government will eliminate the threat of invasion to Cuba and make it more difficult in the future.

Regarding the issue of the incomprehension of this decision by the politically literate groups of the population, I said that this phenomenon had to be very short and the people itself would understand the wisdom of the decision and thus raise its political maturity. We are confident that Dorticos, Rodriguez, F. Castro and the majority of the [Cuban] leaders will understand correctly our decision and we will find a common language with them. Indeed, there are difficulties to explain it to the people, insofar as it has been excited beyond limits by anti-American propaganda, but we consider that there will not be serious consequences and the nearest future will prove the correctness of our decision.

28/X/62 A. Alekseev

1. Presumably a reference to Khrushchev's letters on that day to both Kennedy (accepting his proposal to resolve the crisis) and Castro (explaining his decision); for the texts of both letters, see Laurence Chang and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (New York: The

New Press, 1993), 226-229, 239.

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