

October 30, 1962

Cable no. 337 from the Czechoslovak Embassy in Havana (Pavlíček)

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Summary:

In Cuba, Castro's 5 Points speech has caused discontent among the populace. According to Pavlíček, this is because the Cuban people and leadership do not understand the steps taken by the Soviet Union and instead believe the Soviets have "backed away" from the USA, resulting in the weakening of Cuban defenses. The perspective the Cuban people are taking is not a global one but a nationalistic one. There is a great sense in unease at the Czechoslovak Embassy as a result of this discontent.

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NEWSFLASH!

After [Cuban leader] Fidel [Castro]'s 5 Points for guarantees were made public, the Cubans unfortunately did not at all understand the historic steps by [Soviet Premier Nikita S.] Khrushchev and instead believe that the USSR backed away from the USA, and that Cuban defenses have been weakened. They focused all attention on the fulfillment of Fidel's requests and think that this is decisive for the future course of events. The press, television, and radio are working very poorly and are probably wavering, including the former party supporter, [the newspaper] Hoy. In fact, in some instances it [the media] is apparently intentionally standing in contrast to the views of Khrushchev and Fidel and not clarifying the importance of the Soviet steps. According to the unconfirmed information of friends, including [Soviet Ambassador Aleksandr] Alekseev, it seems that varying opinions were also expressed within the government. According to personal interviews with secretaries of the CTC, there is an apparent total disorder of opinions. They do not understand the situation from a world-wide perspective, only a Cuban one, and their only vision remains the fulfillment of Fidel's requests. Today's party press hardly publishes anything about the USSR, and instead speaks of the indestructible nature of Fidel-ism in a prominent editorial. Fidel will speak on Thursday, probably after his talks with [UN Secretary-General] U Thant end. During discussions with Alekseev I learned of the Soviet friends' concerns regarding the losses in the USSR's position. Questions are being raised about whether Fidel was informed of the USSR's position and the dismantling beforehand, and about the fact that an agreement was reached on supervision by the UN -- an agreement that Fidel then rejected in reaction to [US President John F.] Kennedy's speech. There are even remarks about a new Munich. Together we are very uneasy about the current state of affairs; we are trying to provide explanations but assume that only Fidel's speech on 1.11 [1 November] will bring clarity.

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