

October 27, 1962

Cable from Dutch Embassy, Washington (Van Roijen), 27 October 1962

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Summary:

Van Roijen writes again about the current situation in Washington just as the Cuban Missile Crisis is drawing to a close. The White House issued a statement regarding a proposal by Khrushchev. The statement's tough stance is attributed to Khrushchev's morning message which was completely different in content and tone to the personal message sent to Kennedy. The personal message amounted to admitting humiliating defeat by the Soviets with no mention of withdrawal of the U.S. missiles in Turkey. Van Roijen concludes that Kennedy made the right response to the previously offered Soviet deal, and kept the door open for consultation. The Cuban threat is almost "disappeared."

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SECRET

Concerning the statement issued by the White House today regarding the latest proposal by Khrushchev [vide my 365 559] I learned the following from a very trustworthy and generally very well informed member of the press.

The fact that this statement was [tough] in wording must be attributed primarily to the fact the text of Khrushchev's message this morning, which before receipt in Washington had already been released in Moscow, was completely different from that of a personal message which Kennedy received last night from Khr[ushchev] and which amounted to complete capitulation, with no preconditions regarding the bases in Turkey.

The reason for this about-face can only be guessed at. My informant put forward the possibility that those close to Khrushchev, e.g. the military, pressured him to withdraw his first offer. Yet the present offer also includes such an element of capitulation [since the bases in Turkey that the US press referred to as "obsolescent" cannot equal the value the Cuban bases have to the Soviets] that one must wonder what moved Khr[ushchev] to this new move. It is possible that we are dealing with an attempt to create the greatest possible confusion, not as much in Washington as among the [Soviet] allies and sympathizers. Another possibility, which was put forward by NY Times correspondent [Max] Frankel, is that the Soviets are afraid of US action against Cuba and are attempting to gain time, in which regard the frantic pace with which the construction of the bases in Cuba continues can be pointed at.

In any case, it seems to me that Kennedy reacted in the right way by resolutely refusing to accept the offered "deal," while at the same time keeping the door open for consultations regarding the Soviet desiderata after the Cuban threat will have disappeared.

□

Van Roijen 920.