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EMBASSY WASHINGTON REPORTS REACTION TO KENNEDY AND CASTRO INTERVIEWS

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13 Dec 63.

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Msg Nr: 516-20

44 USC 2107(5)(g)(2)(D)(i)

[5-part message complete]

I am communicating to you herewith Washington telegram Nr. 7087-91 of 12 December 1963.

The Cuban affair has abruptly returned to the forefront with the republication of articles written for L'Express by Mr. JEAN DANIEL after his conversations with President KENNEDY and CASTRO, first in the weekly The New Republic, and then in the New York Times and the Washington Post. From the comments of the American press, I might single out the following elements:

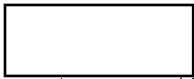
1. Although President KENNEDY did indeed mention Hungary in his conversation with Mr. ADZHUBEI--Mr. PIERRE SALINGER has just acknowledged it after having denied it--it was only, according to the White House spokesman, to show the importance of Cuba to the United States. On the other hand, the President did not make any allusion to the fact that the United States was a passive witness to the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956. In any case, since The Bay of Pigs; President KENNEDY never had any intention of invading Cuba. He categorically answered a question on this subject by Mr. ADZHUBEI in the negative.

2. The administration puts no trust in CASTRO's statements to the effect that the Soviets installed rockets in Cuba to prevent an invasion of the island by the United States.

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At most, it is thought here that Mr. KHRUSHCHEV may have told CASTRO that the installation of these rockets was indispensable to his country's defense.

3. Mr. KHRUSHCHEV's decision is still explained by his wish to compensate quickly and cheaply for the Soviet Union's strategic inferiority. Moreover, as a study by the Rand Corporation recalls, this is what CASTRO told Mr. JULIEN of Le Monde when he admitted: "It was not to ensure our own defense that we accepted the rockets, but to reinforce the socialist camp's position. This is the truth, even if others provide different explanations."

4. However that may be, the publication of these interviews puts President JOHNSON in a delicate position. As Mr. CHALMERS ROBERTS remarked in the Washington Post, Mr. KHRUSHCHEV's emissaries hint that perhaps an arrangement is possible between the United States and CASTRO. The latter, in his interview with Mr. DANIEL, intimated that he might put an end to his terrorist agitation campaign in Latin America if the United States lifted its economic blockade of the island. Therefore, Mr. ROBERTS acknowledges, this perhaps gives a margin to the United States for maneuvering, but "only a short time after having acceded to the presidency and only a year before the elections, Mr. JOHNSON's possibilities for action in this field are very limited."

44 USC 2107(5)(g)(2)(D)(i)

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