

June 28, 1963

Memorandum from the Mexican chargé d'affaires in Washington (OAS) regarding a meeting between Alexis Johnson and Latin American Ambassadors

Citation:

"Memorandum from the Mexican chargé d'affaires in Washington (OAS) regarding a meeting between Alexis Johnson and Latin American Ambassadors", June 28, 1963, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archivo Histórico Diplomático Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City. Obtained by Jorge Mendoza Castro, translated by Tanya Harmer. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/115271>

Summary:

At the request of the United States Delegation, the Council of the Organization of American States met this morning, in a "secret" session, acting provisionally as an Organ of Consultation, on the case of Cuba. The object of the meeting was to listen to Mr. Alexis Johnson, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, about the latest developments registered in Cuba. The talk was divided into three parts, namely: Presence of Soviet troops on the island; Visit by Prime Minister Fidel Castro to the Soviet Union; and Internal situation in Cuba.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Spanish

Contents:

Translation - English

X/442/17

CONFIDENTIAL

LETTERGRAM ['Correograma']

Washington, DC

28 June 1963

JC

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Undersecretary of Foreign Relations

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Mexico, D.F.

91. At the request of the United States Delegation, the Council of the Organization [of American States] met this morning, in a "secret" session, acting provisionally as an Organ of Consultation, on the case of Cuba.

The object of the meeting was to listen to Mr. Alexis Johnson, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, about the latest developments registered in Cuba.

The talk was divided into three parts, namely:

Presence of Soviet troops on the island;

Visit by Prime Minister Fidel Castro to the Soviet Union;

Internal situation in Cuba.

Presence of Soviet Troops in Cuba.

With regards to this issue Mr. Johnson reported that his government calculated that at the moment there were between twelve and thirteen thousand Soviet nationals on the island, without being able to be precise about the number of these that corresponded to technicians and that [which corresponded] to soldiers. He said that the presence of these troops did not represent any threat to the Continent in view of the lack of boats to transport them outside the island. That, even so, his government continues to make efforts designed to get them to leave Cuba. Since last February, he added, approximately five thousand men had left. The troops that remain on the island continue controlling arms such as the guided missiles but, as far as he can tell, they are [also] training Cuban elements to operate "MiG" airplanes and torpedo boats (PT-boats).

Visit by Prime Minister Fidel Castro to the Soviet Union.

Undersecretary Johnson reported that, apparently, the purpose of Mr. Castro's trip to the Soviet Union was to "inject new life" into the alliance between both countries. He notes that it is a triumph for the Soviet Union that Prime Minister Khrushchev has obtained Castro's support in relation to the existing dispute between his country and Communist China and, in relation to this point, he stressed the importance that was given, during the conversations that both prime ministers had, to "coexistence," in relation with other affairs that were only loosely touched upon. He gave Laos as an example. That, even so, the North American government harbors serious doubts about Castro's intention to tie himself totally to the political line followed by the Soviet Union. He concedes great importance to the fact that the Soviet Union, in

referring to Prime Minister Castro, talks of the "First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba" and he adds that this type of conduct is similar to the one that the Soviet Union has followed in relation to other socialist countries. It seems, he said, [that] it is about giving more importance to the "Party" than the "person" of Fidel Castro. By way of a comment he added that he would not be surprised if in the more or less near future the Soviet Union tried to get rid of Castro. At the same time, he gives a lot of importance to the fact that it wants to continue, in Cuba, the same policy that it is observed in other socialist states, that is to say, specialize each of them in a certain activity, production, industry, etc. In the case of Cuba, he said, the only product that was spoken about during the talks was sugar. At no point is the possibility of establishing industries of any kind mentioned. As a result, he indicated that Cuba remains limited to the role of producing primary materials, in this case, sugar. He finished this chapter indicating that Khrushchev's triumph had amounted to presenting Castro to the world as an example of the good results of his policy.

Internal Situation in Cuba.

In the communiqué that was issued after the meeting, on which he based nearly all his information on, he reported that emphasis is being placed on the need to consolidate Fidel Castro's government in Cuba. He declared that the Cuban economy is continuing to deteriorate and, as an example, he mentioned the fact that, this year, the production of sugar will only be 3.8 million tons, which is the lowest figure registered until now. He mentioned the shortage of certain items such as shoes and others, which they are rationing. In terms of transport, he said that the situation is also difficult due to the lack of replacement parts, since they have run into serious difficulties with the equipment that the Soviet Union has provided them with. He reported that the level of morale among workers was very low and that the lack of certain products obliged the government to take measures that aggravated the situation. In spite of this, he added, you could not say that the regime in Cuba was in a dangerous situation, given that, the security measures that it had adopted, are very effective. He commented that the subversive radio propaganda from Cuba had declined while, in other countries in America, it had increased. That the United States are trying [están tratando] to cooperate with the Governments that see themselves as seriously threatened. Finally, he said that the lack of controls on journeys to and from Cuba continues to be a real problem but, he added, [particularly] via Europe.

Ending his speech, Undersecretary Johnson offered to answer questions to him. Permit me to mention only the following:

Argentina: What course of action does the United States government have in mind in which the OAS could intervene?

Johnson: The measures that are being thought about are of an economic character on the part of the countries of Western Europe. He said that trade between these countries and Cuba had notably declined. That some of them had adopted what you could call "public measures" and others, that have not able to do so in an open way, have decided gone for "official measures." He reported that those adopted by the Organ of Consultation [of the OAS] had been very useful to other Governments and he ended saying that, for now, they did not have in mind any proposal that the Organization of American States could intervene in.

Venezuela: What is the real situation of the Cuban exiles in the United States in terms of their possible collaboration in ending Castro's regime?

Johnson: The Cuban exiles are very divided. The American government would like to see them united in one single Party but it could not force them to do this. On this issue, he added, I am not an optimist. In the case that any change in this situation is

registered, this would originate within Cuba and the role of the exiles would only be to help their compatriots on the island.

Very attentively,
CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES

Andrés Fenochio
Minister