

October 26, 1962

Telegram from Polish Embassy in Washington (Drozniak), 26 October 1962

Citation:

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Summary:

Drozniak makes an assessment of the Cuban Missile Crisis situation, based on his conversations with foreign diplomats and respected journalists. Among other topics, he includes his opinion that "The operation of installing the [Soviet] missiles in Cuba was carried out in great hurry, without special adherence to secrecy, and perhaps even with the awareness that the missiles would be discovered relatively quickly. This [fact] has been interpreted [by the Americans] as [a possible] attempt by the USSR to test Kennedy's "the will and readiness to fight." [Soviet leader Nikita S.] Khrushchev chose Cuba, because he considered Berlin to be too dangerous."

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To: [Foreign Ministry Director Eugeniusz] MILNIKIEL1

From: [Ambassador Edward] DROŻNIAK2

The following assessment of the United States' position can be made based on the conversations with [foreign] diplomats and some more respected journalists:

The operation of installing the [Soviet] missiles in Cuba was carried out in great hurry, without special adherence to secrecy, and perhaps even with the awareness that the missiles would be discovered relatively quickly. This [fact] has been interpreted [by the Americans] as [a possible] attempt by the USSR to test Kennedy's "will and readiness to fight." [Soviet leader Nikita S.] Khrushchev chose Cuba, because he considered Berlin to be too dangerous. It was also claimed here that Khrushchev, regardless of the abovementioned motive, intended to secure the additional bargaining advantage for the talks with [President] Kennedy at the end of November. In his decisions, Kennedy took a serious risk by counting on the fact that he could surprise the USSR and cause it to react nervously in other parts of the globe. [President Kennedy hoped that such Soviet actions could then] justify his future invasion of Cuba or cause the USSR to back down once faced with a prestigious [high-profile] confrontation. [However], the reaction of the USSR, which has been generally considered as a "responsible" one, thwarted these plans. The domestic situation of the United States, and the ongoing election campaign, were also a serious, although a secondary, factor in influencing [President] Kennedy's decision. Despite the statement [made by US Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai] Stevenson in the UN Security Council (some of the journalists believe that by favorably talking about the Soviet reaction, he went further in his statement than the instructions allowed), there is an opinion that the Americans will not end the [naval] blockade until all of the missiles are disassembled in Cuba. In any case, they will not give up the blockade unless some other form of inspection is established. It is also claimed that Kennedy got so deeply invested in the issue that now he has no choice but to liquidate the base³ in Cuba in any form and shape, so he can bomb them, including even [launching] an invasion.

There have been pressures exerted on Kennedy, especially from the Republicans (among others [Senator Everett McKinley] Dirksen), not to agree to a summit meeting on Cuba; there have also been pressures on the President from the far Right, demanding an immediate invasion [of Cuba]. [At the same time,] there have been other tendencies emerging among the intellectual circles, pacifist organizations, and partially among the youth, which oppose Kennedy's policy. However, the majority of [the American] society has shown its support for Kennedy's policy (the White House, among other institutions here, informed that it received about fifty thousand letters, favoring Kennedy's policy in the ratio of 22:1). The concentration of military forces and preparations for an invasion continue to take place in Florida. There is also an opinion that the stand of the USSR is impeding Kennedy's further adventurousness, as well as it is making him seek a way out through negotiations.

Received by: [....]4

[1] Eugeniusz Milnikiel (1905 -1969), former Polish ambassador to Great Britain (1953 -1956).

[2] Edward Drożniak (1902 - 1966), Poland's ambassador to the United States

(1961-1966).

[3] It is not clear whether the reference here is to the United States Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, which the United States began to lease, starting in 1903 during the Spanish-American War, and continued to keep even after Fidel Castro came to power. Most likely, the reference here is to the Soviet missiles installed in Cuba.

[4] Comrade Gomulka, Comrade Cyrankiewicz, Comrade Gierek, Comrade Jedrychowski, Comrade Kliszko, Comrade Loga-Sowinski, Comrade Ochab, Comrade Rapacki, Comrade Spychalski, Comrade Zambrowski, Comrade Zawadzki, Comrade Jarosinski, Comrade Strzelecki, Comrade Czesak, Comrade Wicha, Comrade Bodzilowski, Comrade Korczynski, Comrade Naszkowski, Comrade Wierna, Comrade Michalowski, Comrade Birecki, Comrade Katz-Suchy, Comrade Milnikiel.