

Resource Sheet #7

Telegram from U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Llewellyn E. Thompson to the Department of State

The American ambassador to the Soviet Union provides Washington with an account of a meeting between himself and Nikita S. Khrushchev in which the Russian leader reveals his awareness of [the CIA plan for] using Cuban exiles to oust Castro.

. . . Turning to Cuba he [Khrushchev] could not agree with our policy there. Each country should be free to choose its social system. They [the Soviets] did not agree, for example, with Yugoslav internal policies but this did not prevent them from having good relations with that country. He said President had indicated that financial aid would be given to aid in overthrow of present Cuban Govt [Castro]. Bands of émigrés [Cuban exiles] had been formed and threats made against Cuban Govt. He said Soviet Govt would openly support Cuban Govt and would give them economic aid. He pointed out Soviet Union had no based in Cuba and only base there belonged to US [Guantanamo]. He then went on to question our policy of having bases all around the Soviet Union. . . .

Reverting again to Cuba he asked why we did not establish diplomatic relations with the country and try to resolve our problems with it peacefully. He made clear Cubans had not put him up to this but he was merely speaking his own mind. . . .

I went on to say that I thought what bothered us particularly about Cuba was its use as a base for attempts on overthrow of other Latin American govts. When he disputed this I said I had heard Cuban pilots were being trained in Czechoslovakia in flying jet planes. Cuba would never be able [to] attack US and therefore these presumably were designed for use against other Latin American countries. I said we had been most patient with Castro. In first place we had cut off supply of arms to Batista and although there had been differences of opinion in US about Castro we had been fully prepared [to] accept his govt. However, he had made most violent statements against us and had confiscated our assets there without compensation and finally had insisted on reducing our Embassy to handful of people. We had tried to be patient but he had given us no choice. Khrushchev replied Castro said we were using Embassy to harbor spies and Castro was not Communist. He said he had not heard of any training of jet pilots but if he were Castro he would buy jet planes since these were necessary to prevents arms being dropped to counter-revolutionaries from planes flying form US. He thought that in one case we had even admitted this. I said we had taken strict steps to prevent such activities although there had I believed been one case in which a plane had gotten through. In concluding, Khrushchev said we should continue to be patient and should try to improve our relations with Cuba. . . .

Excerpted with permission from:

Mark J White, *The Kennedys and Cuba: The Declassified Documentary History* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), 24-25.

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