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SPECIAL MEMORANDUM

LATIN AMERICAN REACTION  
TO THE CUBAN CRISIS

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LATIN AMERICAN REACTION

TO THE CUBAN CRISIS

S U M M A R Y

From the time of President Kennedy's 7-point Quarantine of Cuba speech on 22 October to this date, Latin American press and radio sources have given predominant attention to the Cuban crisis, focusing particularly on the President's speech and Premier Khrushchev's 28 October letter to the President. Reaction to these has been heavy from Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Panama, and only slightly less so from Venezuela and Colombia. Monitored sources offering little original comment in several other countries--Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, and Peru--excerpted extensively from the President's speech and gave prominent play to situation reports from Cuba and reaction reports from abroad.

Sources lauding the President's speech believed it an especially "decisive" and "courageous" statement, indicating the United States' firm determination to hurl back, with force if need be, a missile threat aimed at all the Americas. Several radio commentators voice the view that out of the Cuban crisis will come a more respected United States and a more united Free World. In only a few countries--Argentina, Panama, Guatemala, and Uruguay--did press and radio come out in immediate support of the U.S. action. In two countries, Brazil and Chile, the public was reported unsure as to the legality of the U.S. action, and from Brazil came frequent reports of civic, labor, and social organizations demanding that Cuba be permitted to manage its own affairs.

Reports of Latin American relief over Khrushchev's letter have been accompanied by speculation on negotiations over other local and international issues. The period since Khrushchev's letter was released has also been marked by increasing charges that Castro is less than a puppet, that he stands revealed as the "worst of traitors." San Jose speaks of him as being "alarmed" and "furious" over Khrushchev's decision, while a Costa Ricans workers union calls Castro a symbol of "tyranny, treachery, and dishonor."

While the view is general that the United States has scored an important success, several broadcasts warn of premature victory yells, cautioning that Khrushchev may seek compensation elsewhere--perhaps Berlin--for his Cuban setback. Area commentators note the wave of disillusionment engulfing Latin American leftists, including Brazilian Provincial Governor Leonel Brizola who, it is said, now blames the Russians for the Cuban situation after originally accusing the United States of an "act of aggression" when it announced the blockade.

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A R G E N T I N A

The Kennedy Speech: Opinions expressed uniformly supported the U.S. position. A broadcast in Spanish to North America immediately after Kennedy's address put Argentina solidly in the Western camp, and this commitment was followed the next day by press and voice reports that the nation had decided that its navy would cooperate "for the defense of the continent against communism." A Lima AFP dispatch on reaction to this decision reported public astonishment and press support. Press agencies told of government measures to avoid public disturbances, but reported no outbreaks.

Khrushchev's Letter: Claiming that President Kennedy's decisive action and supporting OAS measures had helped bolster free world unity, the Buenos Aires radio says that Khrushchev's backdown on the Soviet missiles in Cuba means that for the first time in 17 years the free world has assumed the initiative. The radio contends that wherever the free world has challenged the communists -- in Cuba, in Korea, in Berlin -- they have yielded in every instance. The influential EL MUNDO, as quoted by AFP, says that Khrushchev's revelation about Soviet bases in Cuba comes as additional evidence of Fidel Castro's "traitorous break" with his own people. Castro stands revealed as a Soviet puppet who cannot even count on the support of his own masters.

B O L I V I A

The Kennedy Speech: Bolivian reportage of the speech and related events was heavy. There was no monitored comment, however.

Khrushchev's Letter: In the estimation of AFP, Bolivia's general public was much relieved by Khrushchev's letter. Editorial writers and radio commentators, however, believe for the most part that Khrushchev's concession in one area may lead to fateful consequences in other areas, according to the agency, which reports ULTIMA HORA as saying that the "shrewd" Mr. Khrushchev has already demonstrated an ability to adjust international conflicts on a "gross gains" basis for the USSR. Radio La Cruz del Sur, of Pa Paz, comments that Khrushchev has made Fidel Castro appear as a "mere deputy." It says Cubans only recently became aware that Cuba possessed missiles, and that the "real boss" was Nikita--not Fidel. Another commentator of the same station notes that Khrushchev sent arms to Cuba secretly for a long time but now has admitted it in his message to President Kennedy. The La Paz radio reports, however, that the leftist national mineworkers conference adopted a resolution supporting Cuba.

B R A Z I L

The Kennedy Speech: Reportage of President Kennedy's speech was immediate through use of Voice of America material, followed within two

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hours by full texts of the speech. The official position as reported on the air was apparently equivocal, supporting the OAS decision but opposing the use of armed force for this purpose. Opposition to the American stand was vocal and widely reported. Radio Nacional quoted Premier Hermas Lima as reasserting "the Brazilian position in favor of self-determination and free initiative for all states" before a group of demonstrators soon after Kennedy's speech. Lima AFP reported him as saying: "We Latin Americans have the duty to defend the right which Cuba has to carry out the political experiment which it is carrying out," and former Foreign Minister San Tiago Dantas is quoted as calling a naval blockade "not legally justified" and asking for U.S. verification of Kennedy's accusation against Cuba. Voice and press reports indicated serious doubt among the Brazilian people that Kennedy's accusation against Cuba was valid, and a practically universal determination to insist on exclusively peaceful methods of attacking the problem. On the other hand, according to TRANSPRESS, the Brazilian armed forces stood ready to carry out the orders of the President, "especially in the case when a foreign nation furnishes weapons to a nation of the American continent."

Khrushchev's Letter: As quoted by AFP, Premier Hermas Lima says the outcome of the Cuban crisis testifies to the "great political ability" of the United States and to the "statesmanlike" vision of President Kennedy, and also of Premier Khrushchev. The Brazilian leader praises the "prudence" and "caution" shown by the American Government. And the leader of the leftwing of the Brazilian Labor Party, Rio Grande do Sul Governor Leonel Brizola, is quoted by Lima AFP as accusing the USSR of having used the Cuban people as a mere instrument in the Cold War. Brizola had originally charged President Kennedy with an "act of aggression" when he began the quarantine action. AFP says that Brizola's statement attacking Khrushchev testifies to the disillusionment of leftists in Brazil who believed Cuba was managing its own affairs. The influential JORNAL DO BRASIL expresses regret that "certain groups" are pointing to Khrushchev's letter as an indication of Soviet weakness. By shouting that the adversary is weak, he will be forced to prove the contrary, the paper says. Brazilian sources devote considerable attention to the Brazilian proposal to create a nuclear-free zone in Latin America. The press feels, according to AFP, that Brazilian foreign policy gained a "beautiful victory" from the outcome in Cuba.

C H I L E

The Kennedy Speech: After reporting the Kennedy speech at some length, but not in full text, Chilean stations told of confused opinion about it throughout the country. Students and political circles, they said, were divided, but most labor organizations, particularly CUTCH, opposed the U.S. move. La Voz de Chile said commentators were "disoriented," while Radio Corporacion reported doubling of the guards at both the U.S. and

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Cuban embassies, but no disturbances. Anticipating official reaction, the minister of economy stated late 22 October, according to La Voz de Chile, that other markets could be found for Chilean products destined for Cuba. The official government statement on the crisis, broadcast the next day, committed Chile to support "the mechanism of the security of the inter-American system," but avoided describing measures to be taken. One commentator, who said the statement meant practical suspension of Chilean-Cuban relations, noted that though Chilean public opinion was divided, the ideological war was only rhetorical and no incidents were reported. On this day, however, other stations reported several arrests. Voice broadcasts reported the legislature, labor, and student organizations divided on the government's stand along political lines. While known anticommunist commentator Manuel Heliodoro Molina more than once supported the U.S. position and attacked Castro's "arrogance," a commentary aired by Radio Corporacion reported divided opinion in the nation on whether the arms in Cuba were offensive or meant solely for defense. Radio Mineria added that many doubt that air photographs can determine the kind of missiles in Cuba, and reported expectation of a Soviet countermove against Berlin.

Khrushchev's Letter: Although full reports on Khrushchev's letter are carried by both press and radio sources, comment is almost entirely lacking. As reported by AFP, the Santiago daily EL MERCURIO has advised the government that in the wake of Khrushchev's admission of Soviet missile bases in Cuba, the government has no choice but to sever relations with the Castro government, which is "neither free nor sovereign."

#### C O L O M B I A

The Kennedy Speech: While offering no original comment, monitored Colombian transmitters gave prominent and extensive coverage to the President's speech and related events. The Voice of America relay of the speech was carried, and subsequent newscasts highlighted the entire passage in the address dealing with the U.S. seven-point plan. Bogota radios headlined the Colombian Government's statement reiterating its adherence to the Rio Treaty, and the Government's orders calling for a full military and police alert. Also extensively carried were reports of expressions of support by all Colombian political parties--excepting the MRL--for Kennedy's Cuban arms quarantine order. News agency reports of the Cuban mobilization order, Radio Moscow's reaction to Kennedy's speech, and favorable Latin American and West European reaction to the quarantine order were also prominently carried. According to Lima AFP, there were "persistent rumors" in Bogota, immediately after President Kennedy's address, of a plan to create disturbances in reaction to it. The following day, AFP reported the appearance in Bogota of placards supporting Cuba but declared the city calm as a result of government

measures, though the citizens were "concerned" over the threat of Cuban rockets. Later in the day, reporting the government's adherence to its international commitments under the Rio Treaty and the OAS Charter, Lima AFP quoted EL TIEMPO as blaming the USSR for converting Cuba into a "Soviet territory."

Khrushchev's Letter: Colombian Foreign Minister Jose Antonio Montalve, heard over the Bogota radio, says no one can be deceived by Khrushchev's claim that Soviet missiles in Cuba were stationed in Cuba for defensive purposes. The Bogota RCN reports that the Liberal Revolutionary Movement has announced that whereas the party formerly was in agreement with Castro on social issues, it can no longer maintain this position in view of the fact that "Khrushchev is managing the Caribbean from Moscow and is using the premier as a puppet." EL TIEMPO of Bogota comments that the Russian move to remove the bases is worthy of praise and believes it has opened the door to an understanding on many of the issues that caused the United States to take a determined stand. EL ESPECTADOR is quoted by AFP as saying that, following Khrushchev's action, the United States should show its good will by giving up Guantanamo. The paper claims the military base has lost its significance with the advance of military science and weaponry. Bogota's Radio Santa Fe says the United States has bolstered its international stature and that the Russians have taken Castro's armaments and left him with "nothing to do but continue firing his high-calibre rantings over radio and television."

#### C O S T A R I C A

The Kennedy Speech: A Radio Monumental commentary praised Costa Rican President Orlich's quick action in expressing his country's solidarity with President Kennedy's action on Cuba. Another commentary by the same radio called for unanimous public support for Orlich's decision "to place Costa Rica alongside the United States to share its destiny." Several Costa Rican radios carried the text of the President's speech. Reports on Orlich's speech in support of the U.S. action, the Cuban mobilization order, and the U.S. military buildup were headlined.

Khrushchev's Letter: Speaking over the San Jose radio, Foreign Minister Daniel Oduber Quiros says Khrushchev is far from finished in Cuba. Claiming that the Cuban crisis is only in its first phase, the minister says Khrushchev intends to use Cuba as his trump card when the Berlin and other international issues begin to heat up. San Jose's Radio Reloj sees four results emanating from Khrushchev's decision: 1) the beginning of the end of Castro as a heroic symbol; 2) more respect for the United States; 3) firmer solidarity between the United States and NATO; and 4) renewed unity in the American continent against the communist threat. Castro, despite his proclamations of adherence to Marxism-Leninism, was not

consulted and appeared "alarmed and furious" over Khrushchev's move, the radio declares. Another Radio Reloj commentary refers to Russia's "surrender" and the "victory" of the U.S. policy. Radio Monumental of San Jose carries a resolution of the Union of Workers of the Municipal Council of Cartago saying the Cuban revolution "is dead" and that Fidel Castro has emerged as a symbol of "tyranny, treachery, and dishonor."

D O M I N I C A N   R E P U B L I C

The Kennedy Speech: Dominican President Bonnelly, in a live speech carried by Radio Caribe, noted the "grave threat" the missile bases posed to all nations of America, and expressed satisfaction that the Council of State would participate "without reservation" in international bodies to contain this threat.

Khrushchev's Letter: Radio Caribe states that the dismantling of Soviet bases has been a sharp blow to Latin American communists, particularly to Castro and associates. Russian failure to support Castro in this instance, Caribe says, is due to the Soviet belief that the Cold War is more advantageous than a hot war. From this crisis Fidel and Raul Castro have emerged "thoroughly discredited," unable to protest because they lack the moral right.

E C U A D O R

The Kennedy Speech: Several Ecuadoran radios carried the text of the President's speech, while other monitored Quito newscasts carried extensive excerpts, stressing the passage on the seven-point plan. Newscasts reported extensive comment in "varying tones" on President Kennedy's speech in Ecuadoran political and public sectors. The Ecuadoran Government spokesman's statement supporting the President's action was prominently featured. Also carried were agency reports on the U.S. request for a U.N. Security Council meeting, Secretary of State Rusk's statement to the OAS Council and the council vote, Radio Moscow's charge of U.S. war hysteria, the Cuban mobilization order, and both favorable and unfavorable world reaction to Kennedy's Cuban arms quarantine order. A Quito radio newscast reported an anti-U.S. demonstration in Quito conducted by a small group of leftists.

Khrushchev's Letter: No comment on the letter has been heard.

G U A T E M A L A

The Kennedy Speech: A Guatemala City radio commentary largely paraphrased President Ydigoras Fuentes' statement expressing solidarity with President Kennedy's measures regarding Cuba and declaring that Guatemalan troops were prepared to proceed to any point "to settle the issue with arms." The commentator added that the "decisive" words of President Kennedy had begun to fill democratic and free Americans with "vibrant hope."

Khrushchev's Letter: No comment on the letter has been heard.

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## H O N D U R A S

The Kennedy Speech: Honduran transmitters carried the Voice of America relay of the President's speech. There was no monitored comment.

Khrushchev's Letter: Almost immediately following the release of Khrushchev's letter, Tegucigalpa's Radio Centro carries a statement of the Government Public Relations Office denouncing the "call to subversion" made by Radio Havana and asserting the Honduran Government's determination to act in the strongest way whenever any event arises in Honduras that is aimed at fulfilling orders emanating from Havana.

## M E X I C O

The Kennedy Speech: Initial Mexican reaction to the Kennedy address came in the form of a prompt, firm statement by President Lopez Mateos in Manila, reported by both REUTERS in Singapore and the Mexican radio, condemning Cuban possession of any aggressive arms. Lima AFP soon afterward reported Mexico City "in the grip of a war psychosis" as a result of widespread rumors during the conference of the inter-American Economic and Social Council there, and then, after the Kennedy address, in response to favorable reactions by Central American delegates. Later, Lima AFP reported everything quiet in Mexico, with no reactions from leftist elements. The Mexican radio gave full coverage to Soviet and Cuban reaction as well as to free world moves and opinions.

Khrushchev's Letter: A commentary by Barrios Gomez, broadcast by the Mexico City radio, says that fortunately Khrushchev was not as senseless as Hitler when he failed to withdraw his troops from Warsaw. The commentator says Khrushchev backed down when confronted with the extreme degree of U.S. readiness to fight, when he realized that to fight would mean "total, definitive death" for his nation.

## N I C A R A G U A

Nicaraguan transmitters have accorded considerable attention to the Cuban crisis, with major developments receiving bulletin treatment. There has been no monitored comment, however, from Nicaraguan stations.

## P A N A M A

The Kennedy Speech: President Kennedy's speech was carried in full by several Panama radios, while other monitored newscasts carried extensive excerpts stressing the passage on the U.S. seven-point plan. Panamanian newscasts also featured extensive reports on the U.S. military buildup in

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the Caribbean, the Cuban mobilization order, the Soviet military alert order, Secretary of State Rusk's statement and the OAS Council vote, and the U.S. request for a U.N. Security Council meeting. Also prominently reported were Panamanian Government and public statements of support for President Kennedy's action, as well as news agency reports of favorable world reaction to the President's quarantine order. A Carrasco commentary over RPC stressed the far-reaching significance of the President's speech because it revealed U.S. military opinion, issued a firm warning, and backed words with action. An RPC commentary described Kennedy's seven-point plan as a well-planned answer to communist aggression, adding that at long last the United States was learning that peaceful attempts were useless when dealing with the communists. A Radio Mia commentator, citing the danger of a missile attack on Panama and the Canal, called on the Panamanian Government, as well as all hemispheric governments, to support President Kennedy's measures without delay.

Khrushchev's Letter: Panama City's Circuito RPC says Khrushchev's action has removed any doubts that Castro has made a total sellout to the Soviet Union. The station says the fact that Khrushchev did not consult Castro on the missile withdrawal "could not have been more humiliating for the Cuban puppet." Radio Mia says Khrushchev has "clearly demonstrated that he gives the orders in Cuba, and that he ignores Castro's opinions," but warns that the Cuban threat must be eliminated once and for all. The radio declares that the "time has come to eliminate the cancer that has pierced the head of the Americas." The OAS, it is said "has the obligation to adopt all appropriate measures to dissolve this absurd, bloody, and totalitarian regime." A Televisora Nacional commentator notes the Brazilian proposal for the "denuclearization" of Africa and Latin America and says the Brazilian initiative deserves "great consideration."

#### P A R A G U A Y

The Kennedy Speech: Although Paraguayan stations carried the Voice of America relay of the speech, no comment on the speech or related developments was heard.

Khrushchev's Letter: Claiming that the world political scene is "clearing up rapidly," Radio Encarnacion says Castro now has no alternative but to allow the inspection of the guided missile bases installed by the Soviets on his island in view of the pressing demands of the United Nations. The Paraguayan transmitter says this can be considered a setback to Soviet policy -- a setback Khrushchev will have to explain to other Red leaders. Another Encarnacion commentary says Khrushchev "had to retreat."

P E R U

The Kennedy Speech: Peruvian stations carried extensive excerpts of the speech, including the entire passage with the seven-point plan. According to Lima AFP, the speech caused "great commotion" in Lima at first, but the people relaxed when they learned that nuclear war was not imminent. An AFP dispatch on 23 October reported without elaboration the possibility of disturbances in the Peruvian capital.

Khrushchev's Letter: A Lima Radio America commentator says the victory of the United States "has been overwhelming from every standpoint, considering the proportions of the crisis threatening peace and security in the continent." The commentator says Khrushchev had to "capitulate" in the face of President Kennedy's "firm, resolute action," and that Castro has been left with nothing to show but the absurdity of his role as a "servant and slave of the Russians." The Russian move, it is said, should serve to lessen world tension.

U R U G U A Y

The Kennedy Speech: A Melo radio commentary expressed praise and full support for the "vigorous decision" taken by President Kennedy in his "fervent desire" to defend America from Soviet imperialist aggression. Other monitored Uruguayan radios noted the absence of official Uruguayan reaction to the President's speech.

Khrushchev's Letter: While reports on the Cuban situation appear frequently in Uruguayan newscasts, there has been no comment specifically linked to Khrushchev's action.

V E N E Z U E L A

The Kennedy Speech: Although there was no monitored comment from Venezuelan transmitters, coverage of the speech and related events was extensive and headlined. The speech was carried in full by a number of Venezuelan radios. Statements of Venezuelan Government support for the U.S. seven-point plan were prominently featured by various transmitters.

Khrushchev's Letter: Caracas and San Cristobal radios, while noting that Khrushchev's decision to remove the rocket bases from Cuba has confirmed Castro's role as a mere puppet of an outside power, warn that Castroism remains a threat to democracies in the Americas. Radio Continente of Caracas says Khrushchev's action reveals a "great truth" about Castro-- that he was not only willing to provide Cuban soil for nuclear bases, but that he was willing to provide "a foothold for an awesome attack against continental democracy and our nation's sovereignty." The radio observes

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that Castro has "emerged as a fraud" and a "pathetic puppet who meekly submits to the whims of extracontinental bosses."

The Caracas independent daily LA ESFERA calls for the overthrow of the communist regime in Cuba, while the progovernment daily LA REPUBLICA, also of Caracas, says Castro must stop creating disturbances in other Latin American countries before his government can be respected. LA REPUBLICA says Khrushchev's action is a retreat but that he is trying to cover it up by the allegation that Washington will now respect the Cuban regime. The paper adds: "Something must be done" to make Castro promise "seriously and formally not to meddle in the internal affairs of other nations of the Americas."

San Cristobal's radio Ecos del Torbes quotes R. Ramon Escovar Salom, head of the Progressive Republican Movement, as declaring that dismantling of the bases is "not enough" and that "Sino-Soviet penetration of the Americas via Havana is intolerable." The head of the Democratic Action Party, Dr. Raul Leoni, is quoted by Caracas radio as asserting that the dismantling of the bases shows that Castro's country has been "turned into a beachhead for extracontinental military penetration." Venezuelan radios continue to report special vigilance by public security forces, and a government warning that anyone disseminating reports that cause panic, discouragement, or disorder will be tried for treason. Caracas reports a message from the Venezuelan chamber of deputies to U.N. Secretary U Thant supporting his efforts to maintain peace.