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DEA/2444-40

*L'ambassade au Cuba
au sous-secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires extérieures*

*Embassy in Cuba
to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs*

LETTER NO. L-382

Havana, June 8, 1961

CONFIDENTIAL

Reference: Your letter No. XL-154 of May 23, 1961.

EASING OF TENSION BETWEEN
THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA

Despatch No. 165 of May 16, 1961, from our Ambassador in Chile outlined some interesting ideas which should serve to stimulate thinking on this subject. A realistic search for some factor that can be isolated and negotiated is probably the most promising means of moving toward an easing of tension between the United States and Cuba. The security considerations suggested by Mr. Tremblay are one of the fundamental sources of tension and any possibility of progress is worthy of careful exploration.

2. Unfortunately, the formula suggested would not appear to be acceptable at the present time to either the United States or Cuba, for the following reasons:

(a) In recent months Cuban-United States relations have been characterized by increasing prevarication, and their pledges of non-intervention would have little meaning. For example, if an anti-Castro uprising of any consequence occurred in Cuba, the United States would almost certainly assist the rebellion at least to the extent of supplying arms and encouragement. Indeed, this is the declared policy of the Kennedy administration.

(b) Cuba would reject any compromise of its sovereignty in the form of an arms supervisory and control commission. The Cuban response might well be a demand for reciprocal supervision and control arrangements in the United States. Moreover, the Cuban Government is much too militant and nationalistic to agree to any freeze of its armaments at the present level, leaving Cuba without adequate air or naval forces to resist invasion while the United States was under no such restriction.

(c) In the current atmosphere concessions on the Guantánamo base rights might not improve United States prestige in Latin America or appease the Castro régime for any length of time. In the United States, Latin America, and in Cuba itself, Guantánamo is practically the last symbol of the American presence in Cuba, and any offer to negotiate a change in its status might well be regarded as a loss rather than a gain in prestige for the United States. Cuba has not insisted upon surrender of the base, probably because it fears that agitation on this issue could be used by the United States as an excuse for direct military intervention; but any evidence of a United States disposition to discuss the future of Guantánamo would probably be seized as a reason for demanding its immediate surrender.

3. These reflections of the bitter animosity between the two nations do not detract from the intrinsic merit of Mr. Tremblay's suggestions. Unfortunately, the conciliatory attitude which is so essential to taking tentative soundings on such questions is lacking at present on both sides. Cuba is insisting that it is prepared to negotiate bilaterally with the United States on the basis of an open agenda and absolute equality of sovereign status, it being clearly understood that the political orientation of the Cuban Government is not subject to negotiation. The United States says it is not willing to negotiate with communism in the Western Hemisphere, and claims that the Cuban problem concerns the whole hemisphere and should be discussed in a