

more ready to adopt position on disarmament which might at last make an agreement in this vital field possible.¹⁷⁴

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CUBA ON THE EVE OF CHRISTMAS

As the second Socialist Christmas in Cuba draws nigh, it may be useful to take a general look at the state of the country and the way in which it has emerged so far from the recent crisis. Such an assessment must inevitably be tentative at this stage – some views more sensed than based on hard fact – for all the implications of the events set in motion in late October, but still not yet fully unfolded, are far from clear.

2. The over-all impression one gains at the moment is of a rudderless vessel drifting in a becalmed sea, drifting for lack of any political direction from the top and without any readily available chart to enable it to get back on course. The crisis itself was obviously a traumatic experience for the revolutionary leadership. Cuba became the centre of an East-West controversy but yet the subsequent decisions were taken largely without the benefit of Cuban participation. Much to the chagrin of Castro, the settlement of the immediate crisis created by the introduction of Soviet offensive weapons on the island became the subject of negotiations between Moscow and Washington. To be sure, Castro attempted to inject himself into the picture with his intransigent stand on on-site inspection, with his Five Points, and with his maintenance of a state of “war alert” long after any danger of military action by the United States had passed. Nor have these forays on his part produced any tangible results to date, and if the crisis runs down to the point where there is a final stand-off between the two major powers, with the “no invasion” pledge set aside and air reconnaissance continued in the absence of adequate verification and safeguards on the weapons issue, the clock will then have been turned back for Castro, leaving him in a more exposed position. The Cuban Government may well face increased diplomatic and economic pressures from the United States at a time when the Soviet ability to underwrite the political future of the Revolution has been sharply circumscribed. Moreover, Castro’s own ability to control the situation has been reduced by lines drawn as a consequence of the crisis. For the nonce, at any rate, he seems uncertain of what course to adopt and is keeping his own counsel.

3. Added to this are indications that certain political manoeuvrings are going on behind the scenes. Whether they stem from Soviet pressures to place some limitations on the Maximum Leader’s freedom of action, or whether the Fidelista Communist group is seizing the opportunity to consolidate its position among the power elite of the Revolution, or whether dissatisfaction, accompanied by some disillusionment, in ruling circles is bringing about a reorganization of the Government, or whether again Castro is simply brooding while he

¹⁷⁴ Note marginale :/Marginal note:

After Cuba this sh[oul]d not appear too difficult. [Auteur inconnu/Author unknown]