

Letter from Maurice Dejean to Maurice Couve de Murville (Moscow, 25 October 1962)

Caption: On 25 October 1962, Maurice Dejean, French Ambassador to the Soviet Union, describes to Maurice Couve de Murville, French Foreign Minister, the ignorance in which the Soviet people are being kept with regard to the measures determined by the United States during the Cuban missile crisis.

Source: Ministère des Affaires étrangères ; Commission de Publication des DDF (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques français. Volume II: 1962, 1er juillet-31 décembre. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1999. p. 324-325.

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Letter from Maurice Dejean to Maurice Couve de Murville (Moscow, 25 October 1962)

T. Nos 4540, 4541.
Limited circulation.

Moscow, 25 October 1962.
(Received: 11.50 a.m.)

Re: My telegram No 4512 ⁽¹⁾.

To date, the Soviet people have learnt of President Kennedy's statement of 22 October only through a terse analysis presented in very general terms which appeared in *Izvestia* on 23 October and in *Pravda* on 24 October, as well as in a very succinct summary that served as the introduction to a Soviet Government statement the same day.

There was no mention of the seven points set out by the US President as the basis for his strategy. As a result, the Soviet people were not able to take stock of the radical nature and scope of the measures determined by America, nor of the still more serious, additional measures that might follow. Nor was it informed of Washington's complaints that were invoked to justify the measures.

Despite the harsh condemnation and violent language used by the Moscow Government, a comparison of Mr Kennedy's speech (the full text of which I received only last night) and the Soviet statement throws into greater relief the caution that is clearly dictated by the desire to avoid a military imbroglio with the US, particularly in the zone in question.

The reply to Mr Bertrand Russell (see my telegram No 4539 ⁽²⁾) is along the same lines. The Soviet leader condemns the US in similar terms, but, at the same time, he states clearly his wish to see a peaceful resolution for which not only the USSR but also the USA should strive. He stresses that, until the nuclear weapons installations became operational, such a solution remained possible, and he proposed a 'high-level meeting' which could mean anything: not necessarily a summit meeting but possibly such a meeting.

According to the wording, the conference would also not necessarily be devoted solely to the Cuban crisis since it should review all issues 'currently on the table' ⁽³⁾.

(The Americas. General reports. The US–Cuban crisis 1962, No 135 b.)

(1) The telegram from Moscow, Nos 4512-4520 dated 24 October, has not been reproduced. It analysed a Soviet Government statement from the previous day that condemned the anti-Cuban measures announced by President Kennedy [...]. They were condemned as a violation of international law, a negation of the principles of the United Nations Charter, and American conduct was likened to piracy. There was, therefore, a major threat of global, nuclear war. The US was accused of flouting the right of peoples to choose their own system of government and to organise their defences as they saw fit. Nevertheless, the USSR was, in military terms, at least equal to the United States. The aid given to Cuba by the USSR contributed merely to the island's defence capability. As a retort, the Soviet Government announced that it had called for the Security Council to be convened as a matter of urgency.

According to Mr Dejean, the Cuban crisis was linked to that of American bases close to the USSR and the one in West Berlin, which was described as a NATO base. The US action placed the Soviet Government in a difficult position.

For the complete text, please refer to *La Documentation française*, 'Articles and documents', No 0130, of 3 November 1962, the day's texts.

(2) Telegram dated 25 October and not included here. This document reproduced the text of Mr Bertrand Russell's telegram to the Soviet Premier in which he asked him not to 'be provoked by the United States' unjustifiable conduct in Cuba', together with Mr Khrushchev's reply.

(3) In the telegram Nos 4547-4551, also of 25 October, not reproduced here, the Ambassador recounts the Soviet reactions to the statements made by the US President; the appeal by all the main daily newspapers to do everything possible to 'strengthen the power of the fatherland' and 'put obstacles in the way of the aggressors'; rallies to express solidarity with the Cuban people, demonstrations, albeit on a modest scale, in front of the American Embassy; the instruction to all foreign missions travelling within

the Soviet Union to return to Moscow. However, the United States Embassy in Moscow took the view that the Soviets were trying to limit the domestic fall-out from an international crisis, the seriousness of which was quite obvious to the leadership in Moscow.