

## Letter from André Saint-Mleux to Maurice Couve de Murville (Hong Kong, 31 October 1962)

**Caption:** On 31 October 1962, André Saint-Mleux, French Consul General in Hong Kong, informs the French Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, of the reaction of the Chinese authorities to 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. 353-354.

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T. No 412

Hong Kong, 31 October 1962.  
(Received: 5 November, 3.48 p.m.)

The Cuban crisis provoked the expected reaction from Peking. The day following Kennedy's decision, a vast anti-American campaign was systematically unleashed in all Chinese cities. 'Mass rallies' and 'enthusiastic gatherings' have been taking place since 25 October to express 'the Chinese people's wholehearted support for the people of Cuba now and in the future.' According to initial reports from observers living in Peking, these meetings are, in fact, the occasion for lengthy official diatribes lacking any genuine enthusiasm.

For its part, the Peking press has banner headlines every day and devotes whole pages to the crisis.

Amidst all this furore, Mr Khrushchev's actions and statements, although not entirely ignored, receive very little coverage. In particular, his decision to dismantle the missile-launchers in Cuba, subject to certain conditions, was announced in a single paragraph in the 29 October editions. The *People's Daily* for 30 October printed in full the text of Mr Khrushchev's message to Mr Kennedy <sup>(1)</sup>. Even then, it was relegated to page 3, with the front page being given over to Mr Fidel Castro's statements calling for 'guarantees against American aggression'.

On 31 October, the same newspaper published an editorial entitled 'Defending the Cuban Revolution' in which the United States was accused of 'reacting to Mr Khrushchev's gesture with heightened preparations for an invasion of Cuba.' 'If Washington does not take the five measures demanded by Mr Castro <sup>(2)</sup>, then Mr Kennedy's hypocrisy and the emptiness of his promises will be plain for all to see.' 'Political circles in the imperialist camp are already rejoicing and demanding the total elimination of the Cuban revolution.'

In the current crisis, Peking is thus once again adopting its own idiosyncratic position that is clearly at variance with Moscow's wishes. The themes running through Chinese propaganda should be closely monitored over the next few weeks. It seems indeed to be too good an opportunity for the Chinese leadership to leave it there and not to try, somehow, to use the attitude that he has adopted during the Cuban crisis against Mr Khrushchev.

*(The Americas. General reports. US-Cuban Crisis 1962, No 136 b.)*

(1) On 28 October, in a letter to the US President, the Soviet Premier expressed his satisfaction at the 'moderation and understanding' displayed by Mr Kennedy. He announced that he had ordered a halt to work on the Cuban bases and the return of 'offensive' weapons to the USSR. In exchange, he accepted Mr Kennedy's assurances that Cuba would not be invaded. He agreed to UN representatives visiting the island to monitor the withdrawal of the missiles. At the same time, he made it known that an aircraft had just over-flown the USSR, and he hoped that such incidents would not recur in future. He added that any violation of Cuban airspace would have serious consequences. He would dispatch one of his assistants, Mr Kuznetsov, to join Mr U. Thant for the negotiations (*La Documentation française*, 'Articles and documents', No 01319, 24 November 1962).

(2) On 28 October, in a radio broadcast, Mr Fidel Castro laid down his conditions for the implementation of the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement. They were as follows: an end to the economic blockade and to all subversive activities targeted against Cuba; an end to acts of piracy launched from bases in the US and Puerto Rico; an end to violations of Cuban airspace and territorial waters by US planes and ships; evacuation of the Guantánamo base.