

# Historical Documents

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## 622. Despatch From the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>

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No. 1335

*Havana, December 13, 1960.*

### REF

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Embassy's G-302, December 1, 1960<sup>2</sup>

### SUBJECT

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Reaction of Castro Regime to Election of Senator Kennedy

#### *a. Public Statements of Officials*

The few public references to Senator Kennedy on the part of officials of the Castro regime since his election victory have been unfriendly, although less extremely so than during the presidential campaign. On November 27, for example, in a speech delivered at the University of Habana, Fidel Castro declared that in spite of “demagogic statements” concerning Cuba made by Kennedy during the campaign, the Cuban Government would “wait and see” what policy the new administration would follow toward Cuba. Castro’s statements were voiced in a note of sarcasm and he ended his references to Senator Kennedy by saying that Cuba would give the new American President a political education.

In Pyongyang, North Korea, on December 2 National Bank President Ernesto “Che” Guevara stated that Cuba did not expect a change in the aggressive policy of the United States after President-elect Kennedy assumed office. Guevara reportedly went on to say that any change in the aggressive nature of imperialism was unthinkable and that it did not matter to Cuba, therefore, whether Kennedy, Nixon or some other person was in power in the United States.

#### *b. Press Reaction*

Both prior to and following the presidential elections in the United States, the line taken by the government-controlled press has been that it mattered little to the Cuban Revolution which of the two candidates, Kennedy or Nixon, should be elected to the presidency, for both represented the North American monopolies, were equally anti-Cuban [Page 1177] and could be expected to continue the same imperialist policy followed by the Eisenhower administration (see enclosure 1).<sup>3</sup> *Revolucion*, for example, in its *Zona Rebelde* column on November 11 summed up its opinion of the Kennedy victory by saying that the new

President-elect was simply “the same dog with a different collar” (see enclosure 2). The same day *El Mundo* outlined its attitude with the following comment concerning Senator Kennedy’s election (see enclosure 3):

“No one has many illusions regarding the changes which could now be produced. No one expects much of Mr. Kennedy and the Democrats, whose capacity to maneuver is limited by the interests of capital financiers, by the big interests and by the groups which exercise pressure on the White House and on the Capitol. But no one wants to assume the responsibility of a negative attitude even before the new administration is born in fact. And this is enough to explain the somewhat positive reaction with which the world had met Mr. Kennedy’s triumph.”

An *El Mundo* editorial the following day declared that now that Senator Kennedy had won the election he must be judged by his actions and not his campaign statements. The editorial approved of one of his first acts, that of acknowledging Premier Khrushchev’s congratulatory message, but it assailed his announcement that both FBI Chief, J. Edgar Hoover, described by *El Mundo* as an unpopular figure responsible for the repression of liberal elements in the United States, and Central Intelligence Agency Chief, Allen Dulles, whom *El Mundo* described as responsible for the U–2 affair, would continue on in their respective positions. These two confirmations, according to *El Mundo*, indicated that there was little to hope for from Kennedy (see enclosure 4).

As the United States elections passed into the background, less attention was devoted to the issue by Cuban propaganda media, but the government-controlled press attacks against Senator Kennedy did not cease. For example, *Prensa Libre* on November 27 carried an item which sarcastically declared that as 1961 had been declared the “Year of Education” in Cuba, Kennedy might soon visit the island in order to learn to read and write (see enclosure 5). Habana’s *Radio Voz* had similar comments to make during the same week.

### *c. Conclusions*

There appears to be no significant change of attitude on the part of the Castro regime toward the U. S. Government as a result of the election of Senator Kennedy. The Cuban position is that though it is willing to “wait and see” what stance the new administration will [Page 1178] take, it fully expects Kennedy to continue the same “sterile imperialist policy” of the Eisenhower administration, with the result that “Yankee imperialism” will remain Cuba’s number one enemy. The fact that the Castro regime and its propaganda machine are not pressing the attack as strongly as several weeks ago probably indicates (1) a tactical maneuver possibly aimed at gaining economic concessions from the new administration, and (2) a natural slackening of emphasis due to the fact that the elections are now a fait accompli.

There has been some speculation among American newsmen in Cuba, and the Embassy itself has received reports, concerning alleged Soviet pressure on the Castro regime to soften for the time being its attacks against the United States and especially against the President-elect. Though there is very little upon which to base this speculation, such a move on the part of the Soviets would be consistent with their current line toward the incoming Kennedy administration.

For the Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.

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1. Source: Department of State, Central Files, 611. 37/12-1360. Confidential. Drafted by Wayne S. Smith.↵
2. In this airgram, dated December 1, the Embassy noted it saw "Very little to support" the deductions which certain American newspapermen were making in their despatches that the Castro government was adopting a "softer line toward the United States in anticipation of a change in the U.S. administration." (*Ibid.*, 611. 37/12-160)↵
3. None of the enclosures is printed.↵