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Subject file

SECRET

PERSONAL TELEGRAM

TOP SECRET

Serial No. T-500/62

FROM WASHINGTON TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Cypher/OTP

P R I S E C

Sir D. Ormsby Gore

No. 2650  
October 23, 1962

D: 6.09 p.m. October 23, 1962  
R: 6.45 p.m. October 23, 1962

EMERGENCY  
DEDIP  
TOP SECRET

Following personal for Prime Minister from Ambassador.

Your telegram No. 7395: Cuba.

You will now have seen my telegram No. 2636 reporting my talk with the President. It was quite clear to me during this talk that the President does not expect or intend that the present course of action should lead on to an American seizure of Cuba. Indeed, he said that having passed up this chance, he could see no likelihood of their ever being offered an equally good excuse for an invasion. This indicates his mood, but he was probably guilty of some exaggeration because I suppose there is always the chance of a clash over the Guantanamo base or between United States and Cuban ships. Nevertheless I have no doubt that he has no present intention of trying to seize Cuba. Indeed, you will see that since I spoke to him he had decided to reduce the scope of the blockade and for the time being, at any rate, they will not try and stop the importation of P.O.L. This, I hope, answers your first question.

2. As to your second question, while the President did not mention specifically a conference with Khrushchev, he certainly hopes that the crisis will be resolved through negotiation and discussion. How this will come about will largely depend on Russian reactions and the course of events during the next few days. I had some indication of the scope of his thinking when he said with great seriousness that the existence of nuclear arms made a secure and rational world impossible. We must somehow find a means to get rid of nuclear weapons. He also said that intermediate range missile bases in Turkey and elsewhere had become more or less worthless. He was doubtful whether they had been a good plan in the first place. Whether political developments would enable him to do a deal on the reciprocal closing of bases it was hard to tell at the moment, but certainly from a military point of view he would see no objection. As regards Berlin, he indicated that he had been disappointed with Schröder's visit. The latter, like other Germans, refused to face up to the realities of the situation. One day, and it might be soon, they would have to do so. He was disappointed that some other European Power, perhaps Italy, had not tried to open their eyes. He of course understands our dilemma with the Common Market negotiations at a critical stage.

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Washington telegram No. 2650 to Foreign Office

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I had previously hesitated to report these remarks because in some instances they were so frank that I doubt very much whether he would repeat them to any member of his administration except his brother Bobby. You will realise how important it is that no knowledge of them is disclosed to any American including the President himself. There were other comments he made in the Berlin context which I could not possibly put on the record, but I know you would be reassured by them. If you thought it worth while, depending on events over the next few days, for me to fly home for twenty-four hours, I would gladly do so.

3. To sum up, while for the moment the crystal ball remains inevitably clouded, I have no hesitation in saying that the President hopes and expects that the crisis will be resolved through East-West discussions and he realises that these discussions will include, as well as Cuba, Berlin, foreign bases, disarmament, etc.

4. As regards the position here in Washington, the overwhelming impression I have is that Americans of every persuasion regard the President's action as the absolute minimum required to meet what all see as a deliberate Russian challenge to test the will and resolution of the United States.

5. Incidentally, Bobby Kennedy telephoned me last night and told me that among their Allies the only half-hearted response to his actions that the President had received was from Canada.

[Copies sent to Prime Minister's Office]

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