Fidel's Analysis of Kennedy's Assassination

Radio Havana - November 24 (Sunday): 1963

On Saturday night (November 23) Fidel Castro spoke on TV and Radio on the events surrounding the death of the U. S. President, John F. Kennedy. Radio Havana presents an English translation of the summary of Fidel Castro's speech.

A lways when something very important has happened nationally or internationally, we have thought it desirable to speak to the people to express the opinion of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution and the orientation of the Government to each one of us will know the attitude that we should adopt in such situations. It is true that we are accustomed to serious events because since the Revolution we have had to face a series of situations. Therefore because of the event of yesterday in the United States in which the President was murdered and because of the repercussions this event can have; because of the role the United States plays in international policy; because of this, we believe an objective analysis of the possible consequences should be made.

The Government of the United States, under the former Eisenhower Administration, and the Kennedy Administration did not practice precisely a policy of friendship toward us. The policy of both administrations was characterized by its hostility toward our country. Our country was the victim of economic aggression intended to cause the ruin of our economy and the starvation of our people. It was the victim of all kinds of attacks that caused bloodshed and hundreds of our compatriots have lost their lives defending themselves from the attacks of the imperialists. The hostile, aggressive policy of the imperialists took us and the world to the brink of nuclear war and even when we were not faced with the crisis of last October, they were planning an attack against our country, which, if it were carried through to establish a beach-head on our shore, would have cost tens of thousands, and perhaps even hundreds of thousands of lives. We have constantly been the victims of the United States and on the United States Government and among its rulers there falls a John F. Kennedy much responsibility in these events.

Nevertheless the news of the murder of the President of the United States is serious news and bad news. We should analyze why this is bad news. Leaving aside the human questions in that the sentiments of man might be affected by this. I always react, I think we always react toward murder, toward crime, with revulsion. We cannot consider this a great weapon of struggle. No. And above all under the conditions in which it happened because like all these things - in all these things it is always necessary to consider the atmosphere and the circumstances, the setting and the circumstances. There are times when revolutionaries are obliged to defend themselves. In other circumstances - a normal situation - a peaceful situation, a deed of this nature is never justifiable, especially in the presence of women in a crowd. In the circumstances that surrounded the assassination of the President we believe it has no justification. By analyzing the question from a political and objective point of view, it was serious news, bad news. And some will ask why it is unjustified. Why?

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The Cubans who have received so many aggressions from the United States. Why can they say it is bad news? Why can they take an attitude of this kind? Why can they take an event of this kind as bad news?

Because it is the system we hate. We do not hate men as individuals; we hate the capitalist system. We should not confuse hatred of the system with hatred of men. It is not a sentiment of hatred. We hate the system; we hate the imperialist system. We should not confuse hatred of a system with hatred of men; a system that allows attacks on men. It is not a sentiment of hatred of men and more, in a case like this, it would be despicable. We do not hate men; we hate systems. The disappearance of a system, a capitalist system, would always make us happy. The death of man, even though this man may be our enemy, does not make us happy.

In the first place this should be our attitude as a matter of principle and further it is very characteristic of us Cubans and as Latin Americans composed of many races that death always ends our animosity. We always bow in the face of death even though it be our enemy.

The deed could have repercussions on our country and not only our country but the whole world that alarms us. We consider it a negative event for the interest of mankind. And I am going to explain why. Because in a certain international political situation there can be a situation that is a worse situation. The death of the President has all the perspectives involved in going from a bad situation to a worse situation. The possibility exists that another situation could develop and be highly damaging to the interest of peace, to the interest of mankind. Why? Do we perhaps think that the United States holds an indefensible position on the international scene? No. The international policy of the United States cannot be defended. It is a policy of aggression, violation of the rights of others, a policy of intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, domination, repression, alliance with the most reactionary circles of the world, participation in bloody wars against people who struggle for their liberation, such as in South Vietnam and its a ttitude toward the people of Latin America; its attitude toward us; and finally its international position is in no way defensible from a moral point of view.

However, in the policy within the United States there are supporters of a much more aggressive policy, a much more war-like policy. The whole condition of the internal policy of the United States is an internal struggle for power. The assassination of the President could tend to convert the policy of the President of the United States into a sinister policy and aggravate the evils of U.S. policy. We can say there are elements in the U.S. who defend an ultra reactionary policy in every field. And these are the sole elements that can benefit from the events that occurred yesterday in the United States.

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Why? Because in the United States there are a number of forces, a number of very powerful bodies in U.S. society which have much influence in the United States and have been developing in the United States; and there is no doubt that a U.S. President possessing the highest authority implies a situation less erious than a President without the highest authority.

Within the United States there is a whole series of powerful military, political and economic forces; clashes between the State Department and the Pentagon are now shown in Latin America. There are currents that oppose U. S. military take-overs and currents that support military take-overs in Latin America. And there are currents that support a different policy of civil government although this policy is also reactionary and imperialist. But when there is a strong recognized authority in the United States, the danger from the reactionary currents that arise is much less. There is no doubt that President Kennedy had this authority in the United States. Now there is a new situation in which the Vice-President takes over and unexpectedly becomes President.

This is not a question of the character of the man; it has nothing to do with the character, the personality. There arises a question as to his influence on these forces within the United States. There are very reactionary currents, powerful opposition to civil rights for the Negroes; powerful reactionary economic interests; powerful groups that support military intervention by the United States; intervention in our country; groups that support intervention against any country that benefits their interests; forces that support a direct invasion of Cuba; forces that are against any Government that adopts any measure to benefit the country; those who call for more aggressive measures; a dangerous policy; all these are within the United States. Also within the United States there are more liberal currents; some radical; some moderate; some of opposition opinion who have a less aggressive and more moderate policy. So in the United States today there is a whole range of political thinking from men of the extreme right to men of the extreme left; not all are in agreement with the international policy of the United States.

An event like that of yesterday can only benefit the ultra-right, the ultra reactionaries among whom cannot be included the President and some of the people who worked with him. You cannot place them in the extreme right.

(Fidel went on to recall how the Kennedy Administration had been attacked by the ultra-right. Several attacked Kennedy's policy toward Cuba which led him to play the game of his enemies. As for example the continued plan for an invasion of Cuba that had been brought from the previous Administration. There were a number of issues that gave rise to criticism and attacks by the ultra-right and undoubtedly attacks by the ultra-right were forcing an invasion of Cuba. When a compromise was reached in October 1962, Kennedy was attacked by the ultra-right. On signing of the partial test ban treaty, Kennedy was directly attacked by the ultra-right.)

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Everyone knows what our position was in regard to the test ban treaty. Although we saw it as a forward step for peace and disarmament, that policy was never applied to Cuba. The U. S. policy never applied to Cuba. What went on within the United States? There the ultra-right carried on a fierce campaign against the test ban treaty. The ultra-right is against civil rights for the Negroes and the proposal by President Kennedy was attacked by the most reactionary circles.

In the international field there are elements in the United States who call for a preventive nuclear war; there are reactionaries who think this is the policy the United States should adopt without any consideration for the interests of humanity. It is an objective fact. It is a fact that there are types of capitalitists, types of reactionaries, and the worst type was that of the Nazis. There is a whole series of degrees, so speaking objectively, when there is a lack of strong authority, all these reactionaries may find a magnificent opportunity to achieve their aims. And they are the only people who can benefit from such an event as the murder of tthe U. S. President.

So we ask what are the true motives behind the assassination of President Kennedy, an event that took the whole world by surprise? There is clear evidence that the most reactionary forces are taking advantage of the situation. They are trying to create a state of Anti-Soviet, anti-Cuban hysteria. This situation of hysteria is created by the ultra-right. When the assassination took place everyone thought it was the work of those who disagreed with President Kennedy's international policy, and his Cuban policy because they did not consider it aggressive enough.

Adlai Stevenson was attacked in that same city by members of the John Birch Society. That was what everyone thought. No one even imagined that the murder might be the work of a man of the left. The United States is no longer in the stage of the McCarthy era. The idea that the murderer was a left-wing fanatic makes no sense. But we are not surprised over the extreme right taking advantage of the situation; a fanatic who wanted an aggression of Cuba or even wanted to launch annuclear war.

This is nothing new to us. We can see from this new event comes new threats; that from the bloody murder of the President there might be unscrupulous people who are ready to work out an aggressive policy against Cuba and there is no doubt that this is the policy that is being erected on the very blood of the President.

(Fidel then quoted a series of U.S. news stories on Lee Oswald. Fidel noted that from the very first moment from UPI news agency there had been an attempt to link the murderer with Cuba and the Soviet Union; to start a campaign of hysteria in the United States; a campaign anti-communist, anti-progressive, anti-Soviet, anti-Cuban, anti-liberal, a war hysteria, reactionary hysteria.)

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Then still quoting UPI news stories, Fidel noted the contradictions about Lee Oswald. That he was a U.S. Marine; that he left the Marine Corps and was dishonourably discharged; that he went to the Soviet Union and told the U.S.Embassy that he was a Marxist. Then he tried to obtain Soviet citizenship but that in 1962 he changed his mind and was given a loan to pay for his passage by the U.S. Government on the basis of recommendation of Senator John Tower of Texas; that in July in New Orleans Lee Oswald approached a Cuban student group saying he wanted to help them in an invasion of Cuba. The Cuban student group was suspicious that Oswald was an agent of the CIA or FBI and rejected his offer. Lee Oswald then acquired a new U.S. passport saying he wanted to travel to Europe, including the Soviet Union, in the autumn on a photographic mission. According to the Dallas police, Oswald said he was a communist; and denied a radio report that he was the murderer.

(Fidel quoted incoming news agency reports and the facts showed they were already trying to link Lee Oswald with the murder by calling him a Castro sympathizer and trying to make Oswald a member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, but that too was shown to be a lie).

Still at the start we are only thinking in the dark. Who knows what sinister plans are behind all this? (Fidel then read a cable that a State Department spokesman said there is no evidence whatsoever that the Soviet Union or any foreign power is responsible for what Lee Oswald did; also no evidence that Cubans were behind the assassination of the President).

Now why did the State Department issue this statement? What prompted the State Department to make this statement? Because some people in the United States have realized the danger of this anti-Soviet, anti-Cuban campaign waged against the Soviet Union and Cuba by reactionary circles in the United States.

At this time it is not known what is behind President Kennedy's death but before continuing with an analysis of the facts about Lee Oswald (Fidel turned to (three?) recent news stories about the Inter-American Press Association meeting in Miami.)

President Kennedy had spoken to them last Monday evening. The speech of the President was disappointing to the partisans against Cuba; it was disappointing to the Cuban counter-revolutionaries and it was disappointing to the ultra-right in the United States. Fidel turned to a recent news story in a cable prior to President Kennedy's speech which said the Cubans hoped to have a promise from the President for strong measures against Cuba; also some in Latin American countries. Fidel then quoted from a speech made by (name) at the Inter-American Press Association meeting which charged that President Kennedy's policy toward Cuba was weak and (name*) who went so far as to accuse the President of using the United States Navy-Air Force to maintain Castro in power. Fidel emphasized the the ultra-right and Cuban counter-revolutionaries attacked President Kennedy's policy on Cuba, basing himself on the news agency reports of the IAPA meeting in Miami.

(*N.Y. Daily News)

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The news agencies (or news agency) gave a statement of (name), head of the Executive Council of the Inter-American Press Association, criticizing President Kennedy's speech in Miami because the speech contained no vigorous statement in favor of liberation of Cuba.

11 Then Fidel said there is a strange sentence in this report made three days before the assassination. "I believe," and noted that on November 19 AP cable says: (and quoted) "I believe that a serious event soon to take place will oblige Washington to modify its policy of peaceful co-existence.".

What was the meaning of those words, asked Fidel, uttered three days before the assassination? Was there some plot, some understanding, some plot against the life of the President? How strange that the assassination of the President took place at the moment when there was such criticism of his policy.

And now about the suspect. What about him? Is he really guilty? Is he a psychopath? Is he sick? Who is he? Why has he attracted an atmosphere most unfavourable to the left and most favourable to the reactionary circles in the United States? Is he perhaps an instrument of the most reactionary circles? How curious all this is! Why has he acted s o? He announced he was going to hand over military secrets to the Soviet Union. He might be an agent of the CIA or FBI as the Cuban counter-revolutionaries thought he was. He may be a member of the most reactionary groups in the United States; and that loan recommended by the Republican Senator of Texas, John Tower. We can make no positive statement. He may be innocent. What is behind all this-this Oswald event? This ex-Marine who declared in Moscow that he was going to reveal U.S. military secrets to the Soviet Union; whose passage back home is paid by the U.S. Government on the recommendation of Senator John Tower of Texas. This ex-Marine who went back to Texas and was never charged on revealing U. S. military secrets.

Lee Oswald tried to join a Cuban counter-revolutionary group. He is given a U.S. passport and then another one to leave the United States. What is behind all this? Who is guilty of the murder of John F. Kennedy? Who will be the only ones to benefit? Only the partisans of an invasion of Cuba; only the partisans of brinkmanship policy; only the partisans of war.

Only the reactionaries can benefit from this murder. Only the worst elements of reaction in U.S. society can benefit. How could a fanatic of the left be involved in such a crime? Who can benefit from such a murder? Who opposed the agreement on the test ban treaty? Who condemned President Kennedy when it was signed? The reactionaries in the United States.

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We cannot make any categoric statement as to what is behind the murder but we can say that it is suspicious and that we must be very careful and alert. Lee Oswald may be sick. If so he should be medically examined. Or he may be a carefully chosen agent; an agent carefully trained by the ultra-right with the deliberate aim of murdering the President. He may be a cat's paw prepared by people who know how to prepare such crimes.

President Kennedy, according to them, did not carry out the policy they wanted; a more aggressive, a more war-like policy, a more adventurous policy. Not only the people of Cuba or the people of the United States but all people must demand what is behind this assassination of the President of the United States. All people must demand that it be cleared up. It is in the interest of all people, not only of the people in the United States, but all the people of the world.

It must be established whether Lee Oswald is sick or an instrument of reaction; an agent serving the worst elements in the United States. This is in the interest of all people and we must insist on this. We believe that the intelligent lovers of peace should understand the seriousness of this. They should understand the trend of events; the danger it could mean to world peace. They should understand what a conspiracy of this type; what such a Machiavellian policy could lead to; to make known the strong antagonism of the United States against ourselves; to make known the more moderate side of their U.S. policy; the policy that is less aggressive and the policy demanded by others that is more aggressive.

Policy in a country like the United States is very complex. A number of factors are taken into consideration in a country of this kind. Undoubtedly some of these things we have been pointing out. What are these right-wing circles trying to do? Whatare they imposing on the new Administration? What is the plan of these circles? To place the Administration into a situation facing an inflamed public opinion; a campaign of public opinion moved by provoking hatred toward the Soviet Union, toward Cuba. Toward even progressive ideas.

This campaign tends to place the United States in the worst position; the worst international position; the most reactionary position, and that surely is a serious threat to peace.

We are not worried about ourselves. We are worried about the fate of mankind. We are and always will be calm. We are concerned to give a warning of these events. We are concerned about peace and about calling attention to all these events. We want people to be informed.

We want our people to be informed and calm; that they may be ready, alert and vigilant as always to face intrigues and danger however criminal they may be; and let the enemies of our country know they will always find us unwavering, alert and ready to fulfill our slogan:

Patria o Muerte!
Venceremos!