

CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

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“DISMAYED BY THE ACTIONS OF THE SOVIET UNION”:

Mikoyan’s talks with Fidel Castro and
the Cuban leadership, November 1962

by Vladislav M. Zubok

The talks between Anastas I. Mikoyan, member of the CC CPSU Presidium, and the revolutionary leadership of Cuba in Havana on 3-12 November 1962, were a lesser known, but nonetheless dramatic episode in the story of the Cuban missile crisis, and also marked a watershed in the history of relations between the Soviet superpower and one of its closest non-European allies.

Thanks to declassified documents from U.S. archives, researchers have begun to appreciate the significance and nuances of U.S.-West German, U.S.-Iranian, and other key patron-client relationships that were vital to American conduct during the Cold War. But until very recently, the existence and importance of parallel commitments and influences on Soviet foreign policy were often grossly underestimated. New East-bloc archival evidence, however, has corroborated suspicions that, to take one key example, Walter Ulbricht, the East German

communist leader from 1953 to 1971, was not merely a Soviet puppet, but, since the late 1950s, made his needs and agendas increasingly present in the minds of the Kremlin policy-makers. As Hope Harrison has convincingly shown, there are substantial reasons to analyze Soviet-GDR ties not only as a relationship of submission and subservience, but also as a relationship in which at times “the tail wagged the dog far more than the West realized.”¹ Similarly, new Russian archival documents presented by Kathryn Weathersby have disclosed in new detail how North Korean leader Kim Il Sung was also able to press his militant agenda on an even stronger Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, with disastrous consequences, in the run-up to the Korean War.²

The documents on the Mikoyan-Castro talks from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVPRF) in Moscow, published in this issue of the *CWIHP Bulletin*, reveal that for Nikita Khrushchev and his colleagues in the CC CPSU Presidium (Politburo), the Soviet-Cuban “axis” also acquired a life of its own, beyond the bipolar dimensions of the Cold War. This alliance influenced Kremlin decision-making processes far more than the needs and

requirements of Soviet domestic constituents and forces (elites, bureaucratic services, propaganda and ideology, latent public opinion). In the events leading to the Cuban missile crisis, the considerations stemming from this axis had a part at least as important as the interests and concerns flowing from the dynamic of U.S.-Soviet relations.³

The Historic-Documentary Department of the Foreign Ministry had declassified documents on the Soviet-Cuban talks, like many others related to the Cuban missile crisis, in late 1991. But officials of the Department withheld them (in a manner that unfortunately has become a recent pattern), allowing only a few to have a peek at them at their discretion. One of them, Sergei Khrushchev, gives a dramatic, albeit short description of Mikoyan’s visit in his Russian-language book, *Nikita Khrushchev: Crises and Missiles*.⁴ Some were also made available to the makers of television documentaries, or published in Russian. Now they have become available to scholars, with copies available for research at the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., and translations of the minutes of the post-crisis Soviet-Cuban talks follow this article.

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parity in the cheapest way. When the Soviet comrades proposed to us to deploy the nuclear missiles in Cuba I did not like the idea, but not because of the military risk; because from the political point of view we would have been seen as a Soviet military base in Latin America. We were ready to accept the risk of an American military invasion of Cuba in order to avoid the political harm to the prestige of the Cuban revolution. But at the same time we understood that the Soviet Union needed that measure to ensure their own security. We knew that we had suffered a big political damage at the very time when we were dreaming about a revolution in all Latin America, but we were ready to make sacrifices for the Soviet Union.

I cannot take the credit for the resolution of the crisis. More likely, I believe, the major role belongs to Khrushchev who caused that crisis by his stubbornness, and then resolved it. I did not know what was the real correlation of forces at that time, how many missiles did Khrushchev have. Khrushchev told me that after the missiles would have been deployed in Cuba, Kennedy would have to swallow it, and that later the Soviet leader was going to introduce the Fleet in the Baltic Sea (probably a mistake in the notes—should say “introduce the Baltic Sea Fleet”). I thought that Khrushchev’s actions were too risky. I believe that it was possible to achieve the same goals without deploying the missiles in Cuba. To defend Cuba it would have been sufficient to send six regiments of Soviet troops there, because the Americans would have never dared to open military activities against the Soviet troops.

Now I understand that the actions undertaken by Khrushchev were risky, if not to say irresponsible. Khrushchev should have carried out a policy like the one Gorbachev is carrying out now. However, we understand that at that time the Soviet Union did not reach the parity which it has now. I am not criticizing Khrushchev for pursuing strategic goals, but the choice of the timing and the means for achieving the goals was not good.

When I [Shakhnazarov] said that Americans had to and did abide by the agreement reached during the Caribbean crisis throughout the whole period after the crisis, Castro responded: yes, indeed, it was so. That is why I don’t think I have a right to criticize Khrushchev. He had his own considerations. And it really doesn’t make much sense to replay the history guessing what could have happened if...

Fidel Castro supported the idea of publishing memoirs of the participants of those events and added that he would be willing to take part in the discussions of the subject himself. “I know something about the Cuban crisis,” he said with a smile.

1. The organization and results of the 1987 Cambridge conference are described in James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink: Americans and Soviets Reex-*

amine the Cuban Missile Crisis (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989; Noonday Press of Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1990).

2. On the 1989 Moscow conference, see Blight and Welch, *On the Brink* (1990 ed.).

3. On the 1992 Havana conference, see James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis and the Soviet Collapse* (New York: Pantheon, 1993).

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MIKOYAN’S TALKS

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The documents lend credence to the reminiscences of the historic participants—Nikita Khrushchev, Fidel Castro, former Soviet Ambassador in Cuba Aleksandr Alekseev.⁵ They reveal that the fraternity between Cuba and the USSR was badly fractured. While the Kremlin leadership, faced with a severe danger, preferred geostrategic pragmatism to ideological commitments, the Cuban revolutionaries sprung up in fierce defense of their national sovereignty and revolutionary “legitimacy.” From the Soviet perspective, that of a superpower, the most important fact was that Castro had, in his letter to Khrushchev of October 26, advocated a preemptive nuclear strike against the United States if it invaded Cuba.⁶ This notion, considered dangerous and irresponsible in Moscow, became an excuse completely to exclude Cuba from the U.S.-Soviet secret talks to resolve the crisis. Some of the Soviet leaders, gathered at the height of the crisis on 27 October 1962 at Novo-Ogarevo governmental dacha near Moscow, may even have feared that the Cubans, like Ulbricht, could push them all over the brink.⁷ John J. McCloy, a representative of the Kennedy Administration, told Mikoyan, in New York on November 1, that “he was reassured by the presence of Russian officers [in Cuba during the crisis]. The Cubans could open fire without thinking ... But the Russians would think first.”⁸ Khrushchev himself was forced to explain to Kennedy that the Cuban leaders were “young, expansive people—in a word, Spaniards.”⁹

Mikoyan’s trip was triggered by Alekseev’s cables from Havana. The Soviet ambassador alerted the Soviet leadership that Moscow’s actions had endangered Soviet-Cuban friendship. Khrushchev was particularly upset to learn that a rapprochement

was in progress between Cuba and the People’s Republic of China.¹⁰ The continuing pressure of the United States for more Soviet concessions indeed corroborated this impression.

Mikoyan was Khrushchev’s closest friend and most loyal ally. As had his predecessor—Stalin dispatched Mikoyan on a delicate mission to Mao in January 1949—Khrushchev frequently used Mikoyan as a troubleshooter and personal diplomatic emissary: to Hungary (October 1956), to West Germany (March 1958), to the United States (January 1959), and to talk to the anti-Khrushchev demonstrators during the Novocherkassk riots in south Russia (June 1962). Important from the Cuban viewpoint, Mikoyan had been the last in the Soviet leadership who belonged to the “old guard” of the Bolshevik revolutionaries. He had known all great revolutionaries of the century, from Lenin to Mao Zedong. And he was the first to embrace the Cuban revolution after his trip to Cuba in February 1960, at a time when the Kremlin still felt ambiguous about the Cuban revolution and its young, non-Marxist leaders. Castro, for all his anger, let Mikoyan know on November 3 that he remembered his role. Khrushchev sometimes said, Castro joked, that “there is a Cuban in the CC CPSU. And that this Cuban is Mikoyan.”

What both sides felt and understood during the talks was no less important than their “formal” written content. For the third time, since the Stalin-Tito split (1948) and the Sino-Soviet quarrel (since October 1959), there was an open conflict of perspectives and interests between the USSR and another communist regime. And both sides were fully aware of this. Fidel Castro said (as quoted to Mikoyan by Ernesto “Che” Guevara): “The United States wanted to destroy us physically, but the Soviet Union has destroyed us *de jure* [*iuridicheskii*; juridically, legally] with Khrushchev’s letter”¹¹ it is not clear whether this comment referred to Khrushchev’s letter of October 27, with its offer to swap Soviet missiles in Cuba for U.S. missiles in Turkey, or his letter to Kennedy of October 28, agreeing without consulting Castro beforehand to withdraw the Soviet missiles from Cuba under UN inspection. But in any case, both actions enraged and offended Castro, who reminded Mikoyan, on November 4, that after the Spanish-American war (1898), when

the United States “liberated” Cuba from colonial rule, Washington also did not invite Cubans to a peace conference and Congress passed the Platt Amendment (1901), which denied Cuba an independent foreign policy.¹²

On November 3, in a one-to-one meeting with Fidel (Aleksiev interpreted), Mikoyan absorbed Castro’s first angry assault and lived up to his thankless mission. When he left Moscow, Ashkhen Tumanian, his wife of forty years, was dying in the Kremlin hospital. He learned about her death during the first, tensest conversation with Castro.¹³

Only on the second day of talks, November 4, did Mikoyan fully present the Soviet side’s arguments. He defended Khrushchev’s claim that the outcome of the Cuban Missile Crisis was not a surrender to Washington’s demands, but a Soviet-Cuban “victory,” because a military attack against Cuba was prevented without slipping into a nuclear war. To win over the furious Castro, Moscow’s messenger was ready to stay in Cuba for an indefinite time. “If my arguments would seem insufficiently convincing for you,” he said, “tell me about it, I will think how to get my point across to you, I will try to bring new arguments.” Mikoyan’s lengthy arguments and explanations on November 4 and the afternoon of November 5 finally elicited an expression of gratitude from Castro and an emotional, if grudging, declaration of “unshakeable” respect for and “complete trust” in the Soviet Union.

But the Cuban leader and his comrades were soon infuriated anew when, only minutes later, Mikoyan tried to convince them to accept a United Nations inspection of the dismantling of the strategic missiles based in Cuba—or at least their loading onto Soviet ships in Cuban ports—arguing that such a process would strengthen the sympathetic position of UN Secretary-General U Thant and remove any pretext to continue the American blockade. Castro, acutely aware that Khrushchev had accepted the principle of a UN inspection without informing him, bought none of it. “A unilateral inspection,” he told Mikoyan, “would affect monstrously the moral spirit of our people.” Saying he spoke for the whole Cuban people, Castro firmly rejected any international inspection of Cuba—unless a comparable inspection took place in the United States—and told Mikoyan that if such a position endangered peace, Cuba could defend itself without the

Soviet Union’s help. “Come what may,” he concluded. “We have the right to defend our dignity.” Mikoyan could only plead plaintively that he didn’t “understand such a sharp reaction,” and failed to convince Castro or his colleagues to soften their adamant rejection of inspection then or in a second meeting that evening which Castro skipped, leaving others in the leadership, notably Ché, to denounce bitterly the Soviet stand.

Still another tense moment in the talks came on November 12 after Khrushchev, yielding to Kennedy’s pressure, made a new concession to the United States—agreeing to withdraw from Cuba Soviet-made IL-28 medium-range bombers in exchange for the lifting of the U.S. naval blockade of Cuba. Unlike the missiles, the bombers had been transferred into Cuban ownership, and Khrushchev took pains to “clear” this new deal with Castro before expressing his “great satisfaction” to Kennedy.¹⁴ For Mikoyan, this second mission was no less difficult than the previous one. Castro interrupted the Soviet interlocutor with questions full of scorn and skepticism or just stopped listening altogether. At one point, after hearing Mikoyan’s lengthy defense of the IL-28 concession, he agitatedly cut off his visitor’s speech with the words: “Why are these arguments being cited? You should say outright what the Soviet government wants.”¹⁵

The sequence of Mikoyan’s arguments allows us to look into mentality of the Kremlin leaders. Beneath the veneer of ideological phraseology lay the hard core pragmatism of superpower statesmen who had tested the waters of globalism and reached its limits. Argument number one was that the survival of the Cuban regime in an area where the correlation of forces was so adverse constituted “a great success of Marxist-Leninist theory.”¹⁶ Mikoyan stopped short of telling the Cubans that understanding between Kennedy and Khrushchev was the *sine qua non* for the survival of the Cuban revolution. But he admitted that the American proximity to Cuba and the U.S. Navy’s huge preponderance otherwise would have ensured Cuba’s subservient place within Washington’s sphere of influence. “Communications between us and Cuba are overextended. We cannot use our Air Force and Navy in case of [a U.S.] blockade of Cuba.” [November 4] “If Cuba were located in place of Greece, we would have shown them.” [November 5] “You were born like

heroes, before a revolutionary situation in Latin America became ripe, and the camp of socialism has not yet grown to full capabilities to come to your rescue.” [November 5]

In spite of the U.S. geostrategic preponderance, Mikoyan said that Kennedy “took a step in our direction,” because his pledge of non-intervention against Cuba “is a concession on their part.”¹⁷ Until this episode, the Kennedy Administration had argued that Cuba for the United States was analagous to Hungary for the USSR—part of its security zone.¹⁸ Mikoyan’s words make one think that this comparison had also been important in Kremlin thinking: while the USSR crushed the Hungarian revolt in 1956, defending its zone, the United States had not yet managed to do the same to the Cuban revolution.

Mikoyan’s next argument revealed Moscow’s fervent desire to preserve its credentials as the center of the world revolutionary movement, particularly in the face of the challenge from Beijing. Mikoyan pressed the analogy between Khrushchev’s settlement of the Cuban Missile Crisis and Lenin’s defense of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918), “an infamous peace” between revolutionary Russia and Kaiser Germany aimed at saving the Bolshevik regime at all costs. In fact, the dialogue between Mikoyan and the Cuban leaders revealed two starkly different perspectives: between the Kremlin’s unwillingness to challenge frontally American hegemony in the Western hemisphere, and Havana’s determination to blow this hegemony to pieces through a revolutionary offensive.

Castro and particularly Ché Guevara linked the future of the Cuban revolution to the growth of the international revolutionary movement in Latin America. In a passionate outburst on November 5, with Fidel Castro absent, Ché told Mikoyan that Latin American communists and revolutionaries were “baffled by the actions of the Soviet Union.” The developments especially frustrated Ché, he explained, because, “We are deeply convinced in the possibility of seizing power in a number of Latin American countries, and practice shows that it is possible not only to seize, but to maintain power in a number of countries, given specific [Cuban] experience and the assistance of socialist countries, first of all the Soviet Union.” But, he lamented, the Soviet “bargaining” with the United States and its “open retreat” before American demands had led to de facto rec-

ognition of all Latin America as a U.S. sphere of influence, and discouraged nationalistic “petit bourgeoisie” from allying with radical forces against the omnipotent Gringos from *El Norte*. “It seems to me,” concluded Che, “... that one should expect a decline of the revolutionary movement in Latin America.” He also stressed that in the Soviet handling of the missile crisis had already produced “a crack” in the “unity of the socialist camp.” Both he and Mikoyan knew that this meant factional splits in many radical groupings in Latin America and a shift of some of them to the PRC’s wing.

In response, Mikoyan reminded the Cubans of Nikolai Bukharin, a young Bolshevik (“although he was repressed, I think he was a good person”) who in 1918 also preferred to promote world revolution even at a risk of sacrificing Soviet power in Russia. “We practically had no armed forces, but those comrades [like Bukharin] wanted to die heroically, reject Soviet power.” “Study Lenin,” he lectured the Cubans. “One cannot live in shame, but one should not allow the enemy to destroy oneself. There is an outcome in the art of diplomacy.” Kremlin apparatchiks would repeat this same litany of prudence time and again, when they had to deal with radical regimes in the Third World later in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mikoyan reminded the Cubans that since 1961, Soviet-Cuban economic relations were trade in name only: the Cubans were getting everything, including weapons, free of charge. “We do not pursue any commercial or national interests in Cuba,” he told Castro. “We are guided exclusively by the interests of internationalism.”¹⁹ He pointed out to Castro that the Kremlin, aware of the American “plan to strangle Cuba economically,” had “without any requests from your side” decided “to supply to you armaments, and in part military equipment for free.” The Soviets had also covered the Cuban balance of payment (\$100 million) “in order to foil the Kennedy plan, designed to detonate Cuba from within.”²⁰ If the American blockade of Cuba continued, Mikoyan warned, “then the Soviet Union would not have enough strength to render assistance, and the Cuban government would fall.”²¹

Mikoyan and Khrushchev evidently expected that these pragmatic arguments would carry the day with the Cuban leadership, and that the danger of a pro-Beijing reorienta-

tion of Latin American revolutionary movement could be stemmed by generous Soviet assistance.

For historians of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the most interesting parts of the documents are where Mikoyan gave the Cubans his version of the recent dramatic events. Though this version was obviously tailored to Cuban sentiments and to Mikoyan’s specific tasks, there is considerable overlap, sometimes almost verbatim, between Mikoyan’s story and the story later told by Khrushchev in his memoirs.²² So all the more intriguing and credible are details that are missing in the Khrushchev’s version. First, the documents hint at what possible countermeasures the Kremlin contemplated against the U.S. attack against Cuba. The conclusions must have been bleak, as he explained to Castro on November 4. “We could not retaliate by a blockade of an American base, for instance, in Turkey, since we do not have another outlet into the Mediterranean. We could not undertake similar steps in Norway, nor in England, nor in Japan. We do not have sufficient capabilities for a counter-blockade.”

Mikoyan and Khrushchev (in his letters to Castro before and after the visit) sang the same tune when they explained to the Cubans the reasons for Soviet secrecy and their misplaced hopes to camouflage the missiles. The most eyebrow-raising aspect of Mikoyan’s explanation deals with the question of what the Kremlin believed Kennedy knew and was about to do before the breakout of the crisis. Of course, the standard version of events in most accounts has it that Kennedy and his advisers did not obtain hard evidence of the missile deployment until a U.S. U-2 reconnaissance plane photographed sites in Cuba under construction on 14 October 1962—but Mikoyan told a different story. U.S. intelligence, said Mikoyan, “worked badly,” but “in mid-September [1962] the Americans seemed to receive information about the transfer of Soviet troops and strategic missiles to Cuba.” In Mikoyan’s version, presented on November 4, the initial source of this scoop was not the U-2 flights but West German intelligence [Bundesnachrichtendienst]. Only then, he said, “the American government sent planes to the air space of Cuba to carry out the aerial-photo-reconnaissance and establish the sites of missile deployment.” Kennedy, said Mikoyan, spoke nothing about Soviet troops

which made people in the Kremlin think “that he spoke not all that he knew.” “Until the end of [mid-term] Congressional elections,” on November 6, asserted the Soviet messenger, “Kennedy did not want to speak about the Soviet missiles in Cuba. He did not want to aggravate [U.S.-Soviet relations]. But two senators from the Republican party”—clearly alluding to Kenneth Keating of New York and Everett Dirksen of Illinois—“learned about the fact of deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba, therefore Kennedy hastened to take initiative in his hands... We did not have information with respect to how he was going to act.”

A book on the hidden intelligence aspects of the Cuban Missile Crisis is being co-authored now by American and Russian historians, and I hope they will comment on Mikoyan’s assertions.²³ It has become known that CIA Director John McCone had concluded by the late summer of 1962 that Soviets had decided to transport nuclear-capable missiles to Cuba, though most CIA analysts discounted the likelihood of this possibility.²⁴ Yet, the Kremlin almost certainly erred in conflating the suspicions of some U.S. intelligence officials with Kennedy’s awareness of the missiles. In this case, it seems, Khrushchev’s belief that the U.S. president knew about the Soviet installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba but for domestic tactical reasons preferred to wait until after the elections to deal with them stands out as one of the most remarkable example of wishful thinking in the entire history of the Cold War.

In another interesting sidelight, the transcripts of the Mikoyan-Cuban talks indicate that the issue of Berlin was not the main cause for the Soviet gamble in Cuba, but a sideshow. Berlin was also the most serious bargaining chip the Soviets had, but they hesitated to use it during the brinkmanship and bargaining in late October. Mikoyan mentioned only in passing to the Cubans on November 4 that “countermeasures were possible in Berlin,” adding that the Soviets used the Berlin asset in a disinformation campaign in September-October, to distract American attention from Cuba. In fact, one passage from that conversation suggests that this disinformation backfired, making the Kremlin believe that the Kennedy administration was interested to postpone not only the discussion on Berlin, but also secret talks on the Soviet strategic buildup in Cuba, until

after the Congressional elections. As Mikoyan related to the Cubans, "Through confidential channels Kennedy addressed a request to N.S. Khrushchev that he would not aggravate the situation until after the Congressional elections and would not set out [immediately] then to solve the Berlin issue. We responded that we were ready to wait until the end of the elections, but right afterwards would proceed to the solution of the Berlin question. When the Americans learned about the transportation of strategic weapons into Cuba, they themselves began to get loud about Berlin. Both sides were talking about the Berlin crisis, but simultaneously believed that the crux of their policy in the present moment was in Cuba."

Did Mikoyan's mission prevent a Soviet-Cuban split? There is no categorical answer to this question. Castro had accepted Soviet assistance, but not Soviet arguments. The Cuban leader and his comrades thought primarily of the revolutionary "legitimacy" of their regime in Latin America. After the Cuban missile crisis, the "honeymoon" in Soviet-Cuban relations ended and was transformed into a marriage of convenience. This had both immediate and long-term consequences. For instance, Mikoyan's trip had a direct impact on Khrushchev's ongoing correspondence with Kennedy. In his letter of November 22, the Chairman admonished the U.S. president to put himself into Castro's shoes, "to assess and understand correctly the situation, and if you like psychological state, of the leaders of Cuba... and this striving [for independence] must be respected."²⁵ In all probability, Khrushchev addressed these words not so much to Kennedy (who had not the slightest desire to heed them), but to Castro, who on November 3 received copies of all previous Khrushchev-Kennedy correspondence on the settlement of the crisis. From then on the Soviet leadership, in order to placate their "friends," had to forgive and overlook much in Castro's international behavior, and also had to carry the burden of this behavior. In immediate implication, because the Cubans rejected inspections in any form on their territory, Soviet military and naval personnel had to comply with humiliating procedures of aerial inspection imposed on them by the Americans, something for which they could not forgive Khrushchev even decades later. For the next three decades, the Soviet economy was burdened with a multi-billion Cuban aid

program, including food, equipment, consumer goods, and weapons. Castro, when his dreams of Latin American revolutions were shattered, sought to fulfill his "internationalist duty" in other lands, and found pretexts to restore the revolutionary dignity of Cuba, tarnished during the Cuban Missile Crisis, in Angola (1975) and Ethiopia (1977-78). Even then the Brezhnev leadership, who remembered Castro's outbursts in 1962, was reluctant to make full use of the Soviet leverage on the Cuban regime.

1. See Hope M. Harrison, "Ulbricht and the Concrete 'Rose': New Archival Evidence on the Dynamics of Soviet-East German Relations and the Berlin Crisis, 1958-1961," *Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 5* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 1993), *passim*, quotation on 4.

2. For illustrations, see Weathersby's article in the current *CWIHP Bulletin* as well as her *CWIHP Working Paper* and article in *CWIHP Bulletin* 3 (Fall 1993), as well as her documentary essay, "The Soviet Role in the Early Phase in the Korean War: New Documentary Evidence," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 2:4 (Winter 1993), 425-58.

3. This factor has begun to impress even those scholars who had previously analyzed the origins of the Cuban Missile Crisis through the prism of the bipolar confrontation and the dynamics of the balance of strategic forces, and who firmly believed that "the factor of the Cuban revolution" was of no importance in Khrushchev's decision to deploy Soviet medium-range missiles in Cuba.

4. Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev: Krizisi i raketi. Vzgljad iznutri*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Novosti, 1994), 388-90.

5. "Memuari Nikiti Sergeevicha Khrushcheva: Karibskii Krizis," *Voprosii Istorii* 7 (1993), 89-110; Castro and Alekseev comments quoted in James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis and the Soviet Collapse* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 88-99.

6. See Castro to Khrushchev, 26 October 1962, in *Granma* (Havana), 23 November 1990, English translation reprinted in Blight, Allyn, and Welch, *Cuba on the Brink*, 481-82.

7. Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev: Krizisi i raketi*, vol. 2, 355-357, 360-362, 364; Jerrold L. Schechter with Vyacheslav V. Luchkov, trans. and ed., *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1990), 170-183; "Memuari Nikiti Sergeevicha..." 108; Brezhnev, according to his aide, Andrei M. Alexandrov-Agentov, was "trembling" at the thought of a nuclear exchange. A.M. Alexandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva* [From Kollontai to Gorbachev] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnie otnosheniia, 1994), 174.

8. Quoted by Mikoyan in his meeting with Cuban leaders, 5 November 1962.

9. Khrushchev to Kennedy, 22 November 1962, published in *Problems of Communism* 42 (Spring 1992), 108.

10. See Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, 378.

11. Castro was quoted to this effect by Ernesto "Ché" Guevara during Mikoyan's meeting with Cuban leaders on 5 November 1962.

12. The U.S. Congress passed the Platt Amendment in March 1901, as an attachment to the Army Appropriations Bill. It authorized the U.S. President to occupy Cuba until a Cuban constitution would provide guarantees that no "foreign power" would be ever permitted to gain a foothold on Cuban soil. Castro referred to this particular clause of the Platt Amendment as a constraint on Cuban sovereignty. He referred to it at the conference in Havana in January 1992: "We were told: either you accept the Platt Amendment, or there is no independence. No country in the world would accept that kind of amendment in its constitution, because it gives the right to another country to intervene to establish peace..." *Cuba on the Brink*, 331, 341.

13. Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, 378-79.

14. The text of Khrushchev-Kennedy correspondence regarding this thorny issue on 6, 11, 12, and 13 November 1962 is in *Problems of Communism* 42 (Spring 1992), 77-92.

15. Transcript of conversation between A.I. Mikoyan and Fidel Castro, 12 November 1962, translation in Gen. Anatoli I. Gribkov and Gen. William Y. Smith, *Operation ANADYR: U.S. and Soviet Generals Re-count the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago: Edition q, 1994), 191-99; see also ciphered telegram, A. Mikoyan to CC CPSU, 12 November 1962, in *ibid.*, 189-90.

16. Castro-Mikoyan talks, 4 November 1962.

17. Mikoyan-Castro talks, November 4 and 5.

18. See, e.g., the Rusk-Gromyko meeting of 18 October 1962 published elsewhere in this issue.

19. Castro-Mikoyan conversation, 12 November 1962.

20. Castro-Mikoyan conversation, 4 November 1962.

21. Castro-Mikoyan conversation, 12 November 1962.

22. For Khrushchev's recollections of the crisis, in English, see Strobe Talbott, trans. and ed., *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1970), 488-505; Strobe Talbott, trans. and ed., *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1974), 509-514; *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes*, 170-83.

23. Timothy Naftali from the University of Hawaii and Alexander Fursenko from the Russian Academy of Sciences are on a contract of Crown publishers to write this story. Fursenko has a first-time access to the materials from the Archive of the President of Russian Federation and the archives of the KGB [not Federal Counterintelligence Service or FSK] that are being declassified specifically for this project.

24. McCone's predictions are documented in Mary S. McAuliffe, ed., *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: CIA History Staff, 1992), esp. 51-52, 59-60, 67-68, 77-79, reproducing McCone cables of 7, 10, 13, and 16 September 1962; see also comments of Ray Cline, *Cuba on the Brink*, 125-26.

25. *Problems of Communism* 42 (Spring 1992), 108

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Mikoyan's Mission to Havana: Cuban-Soviet Negotiations, November 1962

[Ed. note: To preserve the flavor of the Russian documents, the original grammar and punctuation have been retained in some cases where they conflict with normal English practice.]

Document I:

"And suddenly — concessions...." —
The First Castro-Mikoyan Conversation,
3 November 1962

NOTES OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN A.I. MIKOYAN and FIDEL CASTRO

This morning a two-hour conversation took place between comrade A.I. Mikoyan and Fidel Castro, where I [Soviet Ambassador to Cuba Aleksandr Alekseev] was also present.

3 November 1962

...

Unfortunately, A.I. Mikoyan said, some differences of opinion have arisen between the leadership of the Republic of Cuba and our leadership. Ambassador Alekseev has informed us about these differences, and about the speech by Fidel Castro on 1 November 1962, in which the latter explained to the Cuban people the position of the revolutionary government.

The CC CPSU, Mikoyan emphasized, had sent me to Cuba to discuss in the most frank way all the unclear questions with the Cuban comrades. Judging by the welcome at the airport, the Cuban leaders consider this a useful meeting. I came here to speak to you sincerely and openly. And now it seems to me that it would be useful if you, comrade Fidel Castro, tell me frankly what the questions are that worry you. Only by speaking frankly is it possible to assure complete confidence and mutual understanding. As we agreed before, after this conversation a meeting will be organized with the secretaries of the National CDR [Committees for the Defense of the Revolution] leadership in order to discuss all the issues in detail.

In response Fidel Castro said that the Cuban leadership was glad to see A.I. Mikoyan in Cuba once again, and to speak with him about questions that are important for both sides. We are aware, joked Fidel Castro, that N.S. Khrushchev once said: "there is a Cuban in the CC CPSU and this Cuban is A.I. Mikoyan." We can speak to you, Fidel Castro continued, very frankly. We profoundly trust the Soviet Union.

Regarding the questions that caused some differences, as we explained it to our people, I [Castro] would like to say the following.

These questions are motivated, first of all, by psychological factors. I would like to stress

that in those days when a serious danger arose, our whole people sensed a great responsibility for the fate of the motherland. Every nerve of the people was strained. There was a feeling that the people were united in their resolve to defend Cuba. Every Cuban was ready to repel the aggressors with arms in hand, and ready to devote their lives to the defense of their country. The whole country was united by a deep hatred of USA imperialism. In those days we did not even arrest anyone, because the unity of the people was so staggering. That unity was the result of considerable ideological work carried out by us in order to explain the importance of Soviet aid to Cuba, to explain the purity of the principles in the policy of the USSR.

We spoke with the people about the high patriotic objectives we were pursuing in obtaining arms to defend the country from aggression. We said that the strategic weapons were a guarantee of firmness for our defense. We did not classify the arms as defensive and offensive, insofar as everything depends on the objectives for which they are used... [Ellipsis in original.]

Speaking of psychological questions, we would like to underline that the Cuban people did understand us. They understood that we had received Soviet weapons, that Cuban defense capacities had increased immeasurably. Thus, when Kennedy attempted to frighten us, the Cuban people reacted very resolutely, very patriotically. It is hard to imagine the enthusiasm, the belief in victory with which the Cubans voluntarily enlisted themselves into the army. The people sensed enormous forces inside themselves. Aware of the real solidarity of the Soviet government and people, Cubans psychologically felt themselves to be strong. The Soviet Union's solidarity found its material embodiment, became the banner around which the forces and courage of our people closely united.

In observing Soviet strategic arms on their territory, the people of Cuba sensed an enormous responsibility to the countries of the socialist camp. They were conscious that these mighty weapons had to be preserved in the interests of the whole socialist camp. Therefore, regardless of the fact that USA planes were continuously violating our air space, we decided to weaken the anti-aircraft defense of Havana, but at the same time strengthen the defense of the missile locations. Our people proudly sensed their role as a defender of the socialist countries' interests. Anti-aircraft gunners and the soldiers protecting the missile locations were full of enthusiasm, and ready to defend these at the price of their own lives.

The tension of the situation was growing, and the psychological tension was growing also. The whole of Cuba was ready for

defense...[Ellipsis in original.]

And suddenly—concessions...[Ellipsis in original.]

Concessions on the part of the Soviet Union produced a sense of oppressiveness. Psychologically our people were not prepared for that. A feeling of deep disappointment, bitterness and pain has appeared, as if we were deprived of not only the missiles, but of the very symbol of solidarity. Reports of missile launchers being dismantled and returned to the USSR at first seemed to our people to be an insolent lie. You know, the Cuban people were not aware of the agreement, were not aware that the missiles still belonged to the Soviet side. The Cuban people did not conceive of the juridical status of these weapons. They had become accustomed to the fact that the Soviet Union gave us weapons and that they became our property.

And suddenly came the report of the American [news] agency UPI that "the Soviet premier has given orders to Soviet personnel to dismantle missile launchers and return them to the USSR." Our people could not believe that report. It caused deep confusion. People didn't understand the way that the issue was structured—the possibility of removing missile armaments from Cuba if the USA liquidated its bases in Turkey.

I was saying, Fidel Castro continued, that in the post-revolutionary years we have carried out much ideological work to prepare people for understanding socialist ideas, marxist ideas. These ideas today are deeply rooted. Our people admire the policies of the Soviet government, learn from the Soviet people to whom they are deeply thankful for invaluable help and support. But at that difficult moment our people felt as if they had lost their way. Reports on 28 October that N.S. Khrushchev had given orders to dismantle missile launchers, that such instructions had been given to Soviet officers and there was not a word in the message about the consent of the Cuban government, that report shocked people.

Cubans were consumed by a sense of disappointment, confusion and bitterness. In walking along the street, driving to armed units, I observed that people did not understand that decision.

Why was that decision made unilaterally, why are the missiles being taken away from us? And will all the weapons be taken back? — these were the questions disturbing all the people.

In some 48 hours that feeling of bitterness and pain spread among all the people. Events were rapidly following one another. The offer to withdraw weapons from Cuba under the condition of liquidating bases in Turkey was advanced on 27 October. On 28 October there came the order to dismantle the missiles and the consent to an inspection.

We were very worried by the fact that the moral spirit of our people had declined sharply. That affected their fighting spirit too. At the same time the insolent flights of American planes into Cuban airspace became more frequent, and we were asked not to open fire on them. All of this generated a strong demoralizing influence. The feeling of disappointment, pain and bitterness that enveloped people could have been used by counter-revolutionaries to instigate anti-soviet elements. Enemies could have profited because the legal rules about which we had been speaking with the people were being forgotten. The decision was made without consultation, without coordinating it with our government.

Nobody had the slightest wish to believe it, everyone thought it was a lie.

...

Since then our people began to address very sensitively the matter of sovereignty. Besides, after the current crisis the situation remained juridically constant, as the "status quo" did not change:

1. The blockade organized by the USA administration is still in place. The USA continues to violate the freedom of the sea.

2. The Americans seek to determine what weapons we can possess. Verification is being organized. The situation is developing in the same direction as it is or was in Morocco, Guinea, Ghana, Ceylon and Yemen.

3. The USA continues to violate Cuban airspace and we must bear it. And moreover, the consent for inspections has been given without asking us.

All of this seemed to our people to be a step backward, a retreat. It turns out that we must accept inspections, accept the right of the USA to determine what kinds of weapons we can use.

Our revolution rests firmly on the people. A drop in moral spirit can be dangerous for the cause of revolution.

The Soviet Union consolidated itself as a state a long time ago and it can carry out a flexible policy, it can afford maneuvering. The Soviet people readily understand their government, trust it wholeheartedly.

Cuba is a young developing country. Our people are very impulsive. The moral factor has a special significance in our country.

We were afraid that these decisions could provoke a breach in the people's unity, undermine the prestige of the revolution in the eyes of Latin American peoples, in the eyes of the whole world.

...

It was very difficult for us to explain the situation to the people. If the decisions had been taken in another way, it would have been easier. If a truce were suggested first and then the issues were coordinated, we would have been in a better position.

Comrade A.I. Mikoyan made an observa-

tion that the threat of aggression was so critical, that there was no time for consultations.

...

Then for half an hour A.I. Mikoyan discussed the issues about which Fidel Castro had talked, but these explanations were interrupted by an incoming report about the death of Mikoyan's wife. The transcript of this part of the conversation will be transmitted with the notes of the next conversation.

3.XI.62 ALEKSEEV

[Source: Russian Foreign Ministry archives, obtained and translated by NHK television, copy provided by Philip Brenner; translation by Vladimir Zaemsky.]

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Document II:

**"It was necessary to use the art of diplomacy"
—The Second Castro-Mikoyan Conversation,
4 November 1962**

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

A.I. MIKOYAN with Fidel CASTRO. [Cuban President] Oswaldo DORTICOS TORRADO, [Defense Minister] Raul CASTRO, Ernesto GUEVARA, Emilio ARAGONES and Carlos Rafael RODRIGUEZ

4 November 1962

A.I. MIKOYAN transmitted to the Cuban leaders cordial fraternal regards on behalf of the Presidium of the CC CPSU and N.S. Khrushchev. He said that the Central Committee of the CPSU feels admiration and respect toward Cuban leaders, who from the very beginning of their struggle demonstrated courage and fearlessness, confidence in revolutionary victory in Cuba, readiness to devote all their forces to the struggle. We are proud of the victory achieved by the Cuban revolution against interventionists on Playa Giron [Giron Beach, Bay of Pigs]. Cuban revolutionaries demonstrated such a potent spirit of resistance that it inspires admiration and proves that the Cubans are always ready to fight until victory is achieved. Cuban leaders have shown great courage, intrepidity, and firmness in dangerous days. The CC CPSU admires the readiness of the Cuban people to stand up. We trust Cuban leaders as we do ourselves.

In the course of the Cuban events our party and government were acting having in mind to do whatever was necessary to make [the situation] better for Cuba. When Ambassador Alekseev informed [us] about the opinion of comrade Fidel Castro, that there are some differences between our parties, we were very pained. Immediately all

the leadership held a meeting. For the question of Cuba worries us a lot. We felt it necessary to re-establish mutual trust because trust is the basis of everything, the basis of really fraternal relations. We understood that no correspondence can suffice to explain completely the misunderstanding of those days. Therefore the CC CPSU decided to send me to Cuba in order to explain to our friends the Soviet position and to inform them on other subjects that may be of interest to them. We know, - Mikoyan continued, - that if we explain everything frankly then you, our brothers, will understand us. Comrade Mikoyan made the observation that he, naturally, had no intention to put pressure [on Cuba], that his task was to explain our position. Being acquainted with the Cuban comrades, - A.I. Mikoyan said, - I'm confident that they will agree with it. It is certainly possible that even after our explanations there will remain some issues about which we shall still have different points of view. Our task is to preserve mutual trust which is needed for really friendly relations with Cuba, for the future of Cuba and the USSR and the whole world revolutionary movement.

Yesterday comrade Fidel Castro explained very frankly and in detail that the Cuban people had not understood everything regarding the most recent actions of the Soviet government. Comrade Fidel Castro also spoke on the issues which worry the Cuban leadership. He underlined the role of the psychological factor which has special significance in Cuba. Several particularities of the psychological mold of Cubans have formed as a result of the historical development of the country. And, as comrade Fidel Castro was saying, it is very important to take this into account.

In New York, said Mikoyan, I learned the substance of the speech by comrade Fidel Castro on 1 November. Certainly I could not perceive completely the speech insofar as the American press frequently distorts the substance of the statements made by Cuban leaders. But even on the basis of the American press interpretation I understood that it was a friendly speech pronounced by comrade Fidel Castro underlining the great significance of friendship between the Soviet Union and Cuba, mentioning the broad aid rendered by the Soviet Union to Revolutionary Cuba. He also said that there were some differences in views between us, but those differences had to be discussed on the level of parties and governments, not massive rallies. Those words of Fidel Castro, testifying sentiments of friendship and trust toward our country, were reaffirmed by the welcome reception on my arrival to Havana. The very tone of the conversation with comrade Fidel Castro was imbued with a sense of fellowship and trust.

I'm confident, continued Mikoyan, that the existing mutual trust between us will always be there notwithstanding some differences of opin-

ion. The American press spreads a lot of conjectures regarding the aim of my trip to Cuba. They are writing that I went to Havana allegedly in order to apply pressure on Cuban leaders, in order to "pacify" them, as [U.S. negotiator John] McCloy had stated to the American newspapers. About my conversation with McCloy I can tell you in detail afterward, but first of all I would like to answer the main questions.

As I have already stated before my departure from New York, the Soviet government was supporting the five points put forward by comrade Fidel Castro. The demand on liquidation of the US Guantanamo base is a just and correct demand. I had no plans to speak publicly in New York, but when I read in the American press the speculation about the objectives of my trip, I decided to voice that statement in order to make my position completely clear. Using radio, American propaganda is trying to embroil Cuba [in conflict] with the Soviet Union, is trying to sting Cubans to the quick. It's natural. Because the enemy can't behave differently. He always acts like this. But the enemy must be repulsed.

By decision of the CC CPSU, my task includes explaining our position to Cuban leaders within my abilities and capacities, so that no doubts are left. We also want to discuss new problems that arise in front of our two countries. It is not a part of my task at all to put pressure on Cuban leaders. That is an impudent conjecture of American propaganda. Our interests are united. We are marxist-leninists and we are trying to achieve common objectives. We discussed the current situation at the CC CPSU and came to a decision that there was no complete relaxation of tensions yet.

On the military side we can observe a considerable decrease in danger. I can add for myself that in essence currently the danger has abated. But the diplomatic tension still exists. Plans for military assault have been frustrated.

A victory was gained regarding prevention of a military assault. But still we are facing even larger tasks on the diplomatic field. We must achieve a victory over the diplomatic tension, too.

What does that victory mean? How do we understand it? I'll explain later.

I would like to do whatever is necessary to ensure that you understand us correctly. I'm not in a hurry and if you don't object, I'll stay in Cuba as long as necessary to explain all the aspects of our position. I think, first of all, we must consider those issues where some differences have appeared. I'll do my best to help you understand us. We must consider all these questions and decide what can be done jointly to ensure the success of the further development and future of the Cuban revolution.

At the moment of critical military danger we had no opportunity for mutual consultations, but now we have good possibilities for thorough

consultations on diplomatic forms of struggle in order to determine how to act in common.

Comrades, I would like to begin by asking you to say, what steps of the Soviet government have caused misunderstanding and differences, in order to give you the necessary explanations. True, yesterday comrade Fidel Castro already narrated much about this. But I would like to ask both comrade Fidel Castro and all of you to raise all those questions that you are interested in.

F. CASTRO. My colleagues are aware of the substance of our conversation yesterday, but in order to summarize the questions which are important for us let me repeat them briefly. As comrade Mikoyan has already said, recent events have considerably influenced the moral spirit of our people. They were regarded as a retreat at the very moment when every nerve of our country had been strained. Our people is brought up in the spirit of trust in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, many people do not understand the linkage between the Cuban events and the issue of the liquidation of American bases in Turkey. The unexpected withdrawal of Soviet missiles without consultations with the Cuban government has produced a negative impression upon our people. The Soviet Union gave its consent for inspections also without sending a notification to the Cuban leadership. It is necessary to take into account the special delicacy of our people which has been created as a result of several historic developments. The "Platt amendment," imposed by the Americans upon Cuba, played a particular role in this regard. Using the Platt amendment the United States of America prohibited the Cuban government from deciding by itself questions of foreign policy. The decisions were made by the Americans behind the back of the Cuban people. During the current crisis there was also an impression that important issues, concerning all of us, were discussed and resolved in the absence of Cuban representatives, without consultations with the Cuban government. The USA imperialists undertook a series of aggressive measures against the Republic of Cuba. They set up a naval blockade of our country, they try to determine what kind of armament we can have and use. Systematically they violate Cuban air space and elevate these violations of the sovereignty of the Cuban Republic into a prerogative of the USA administration.

There is the question of inspections. True, inspections are a sore subject for us. We cannot take that step. If we agree to an inspection, then it is as if we permit the United States of America to determine what we can or cannot do in foreign policy. That hurts our sovereignty.

In conclusion I said that we are a young country, where a revolution has recently triumphed, so we can't carry out such a flexible policy as does the Soviet Union because they are a consolidated state and on that ground they have

possibilities for maneuvering, for flexibility in foreign policy. The Soviet people easily understands similar decisions of its government.

The mentioned facts represent a danger for the revolutionary process, for the Cuban revolution itself.

Here is the summary of the questions elucidated by me in the conversation yesterday with comrade Mikoyan. We didn't touch on the issue of the assessment of the international situation. I made the observation that at the most critical moment it had appeared that we had no understanding of preceding steps. For example, the objective of placing strategic armaments in Cuba was not clear enough for us. We could not understand where is the exit from that complicated situation. By no means were we thinking that the result could be a withdrawal of strategic armaments from Cuban territory.

Yesterday comrade Mikoyan partly explained some issues but the conversation was interrupted by the tragic news of the spouse of A.I. Mikoyan.

A.I. MIKOYAN asks: Perhaps the Cuban comrades want some other questions to be answered?

DORTICOS makes the observation that in the summary offered by Fidel Castro there have been generalized all the questions that have caused differences, but he asks [Mikoyan] to explain, why N.S. Khrushchev has accepted Kennedy's offer to make a statement of nonaggression against Cuba under the condition of removing Soviet missiles from Cuba, though the Cuban government had not yet given its view in this regard.

A.I. MIKOYAN asks if there are more questions.

C.R. RODRIGUEZ says that his question is related to that formulated by Dorticos. It is not clear what does the Soviet Union regard as a victory, whether its substance consists in the military success or the diplomatic one. We were considering that for the time being it is impossible to speak about victory insofar as the guarantees on the part of the USA are ephemeral.

A.I. MIKOYAN says that he will give the most detailed answer to all the questions raised by comrade Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders in order to make the Cuban comrades understand us completely. Therefore I will have to speak for a long time. Later, when you bring forward your opinions and perhaps ask some other questions, I would like to say some more words. If my arguments seem to you not convincing, please notify me, I will think over what to do in order to make you understand me, I will try to put forward new arguments.

The main issue, the issue of prime impor-

tance, is why have we decided to withdraw the strategic missiles from the Cuban territory. Apparently you agree that this is the main question. If there is no understanding over this issue, it is difficult to comprehend other questions.

Being in Moscow I did not realize that this question would be asked. Previously it had not arisen.

The fate of the Cuban revolution has always been important for us, especially beginning from the moment when Fidel Castro declared the objective of constructing socialism in Cuba. Socialist revolution in Latin America should develop and strengthen. When we received the news that had defeated the counter-revolutionary landing on Playa Giron it naturally made us happy, but to some extent it worried us, too. Certainly, it was foolish on the part of the Americans to organize such an invasion. But that fact indicated that they would try again to organize an aggression against Cuba, that they would not tolerate the further development and strengthening of socialist Cuba. It is difficult for them to reconcile with the existence of Cuba which is constructing socialism in the immediate proximity of their borders.

This event worries us, as we were realizing that the Americans would not give up their attempts to suffocate the Cuban revolution. And indeed, the American imperialists began elaborating two parallel plans. The first one consisted of an attempt at the economic suffocation of the Republic of Cuba in order to provoke discontent inside the country, to provoke famine and to achieve the collapse of the new regime due to pressure from within, without military intervention. The second plan foresaw preparation of an intervention with the participation of Latinamerican mercenaries and with the support of the United States of America. This plan envisaged invasion as the means to deal the final blow and to kill the revolutionary regime, if the economic hardships weaken it from inside. After the defeat on Playa Giron the American imperialists proceeded to the execution of those plans.

The victory of the revolution in Cuba is a great success of marxist-leninist theory, and a defeat of the Cuban revolution would mean a two or three times larger defeat of the whole socialist camp. Such a defeat would throw back the revolutionary movement in many countries. Such a defeat would bear witness to the supremacy of imperialist forces in the entire world. That would be an incredible blow which would change the correlation of forces between the two systems, would hamper the development of the international revolutionary movement. We were and are considering to be our duty, a duty of communists, to do everything necessary to defend the Cuban revolution, to frustrate the imperialist plans.

Some time ago our comrades informed us that the economic situation in the country [Cuba]

had worsened. This deterioration was caused by pressure on the part of the Americans and large expenses for defensive needs. We were afraid that the worsening of the situation could be the result of the implementation of the [American] plan for the economic suffocation of Cuba. The CCCPSU discussed the situation in Cuba and decided, without your request—you are very modest and try not to disturb us by requests—to undertake some measures in order to strengthen our help to Cuba. If before you were receiving part of the weapons on credit and only a portion of armaments free of charge, now we decided to supply you gratis with weapons and partly with military uniforms—100 thousand sets in two years—and equipment. We saw that the Cuban trade representatives, who were participating in the negotiations, were feeling themselves somewhat uneasy. They were short of more than 100 million dollars to somehow balance the budget. Therefore we accepted all their proposals in order to frustrate the plan of Kennedy designed for [causing] an internal explosion in Cuba.

The same thing can be said regarding food and manufactured goods. In order to alleviate the economic situation in Cuba we sent there articles and food worth 198 million rubles. Speaking very frankly, we have been giving to you everything without counting.

According to my point of view, we have entered a new stage of relations which nowadays has a different character. Indeed, during the first stage there was some semblance of mutually beneficial trade. Currently those supplies are part of clearly fraternal aid.

I recall, that after his trip to Bulgaria [14-20 May 1962—ed.], that, N.S. Khrushchev told us that while staying in that country he was thinking all the time of Cuba, he was worried that the Americans would organize an intervention in Cuba with the aid of reactionary governments of Latin America or would carry out a direct aggression. They do not want to permit the strengthening of Cuba, and the defeat of Cuba, N.S. Khrushchev said to us, would deliver a very powerful blow upon the whole world revolutionary movement. We must frustrate the plans of the American imperialists.

It was at that time when there appeared a plan that carried great risk. This plan placed huge responsibility on the Soviet government insofar as it contained within it the risk of a war which the imperialists could unleash against the Soviet Union. But we decided that it was necessary to save Cuba. At one time N.S. Khrushchev related that plan to us and asked us to think it through very seriously in order to make a decision in three days. We had to think over both the consequences of its implementation, what to do during different stages of its execution, and how to achieve Cuba's salvation without unleashing a nuclear war. It was decided to entrust our military with elaborating their considerations and to discuss it with the

Cuban leadership.

The main condition for the success of this plan was to carry it out secretly. In this case the Americans would find themselves in a very difficult position. Our military people said that four months were necessary to implement that plan. We foresaw that the delivery of armaments and Soviet troops to Cuban territory would take a half of the preparatory period. Measures were also thought out in order to prevent the unleashing of global nuclear war. We decided to work through the UN, to mobilize international public opinion, to do everything in order to avoid a world collision. We understood that the Americans could use a blockade. It appeared to be the most dangerous thing if the USA imperialists blockaded the supplies of fuel to Cuba. They could abstain from limiting food deliveries to Cuba, while demagogically declaring that they do not want to doom the Cuban people to famine, and at the same time prevent supplies of weapons and fuel to Cuba. And Cuba, who doesn't have her own energy resources, can't survive without fuel. Our communications with Cuba are very stretched. We are separated by enormous distances. Therefore transportation to Cuba is very difficult. We can't use our Air Force or Navy forces in case of a blockade of Cuba. Therefore we had to use such means as political maneuvering, diplomacy, we had to utilize the UN. For example, we could not blockade American bases in Turkey in response because we have no other exit to the Mediterranean. We could not undertake such steps neither in Norway, nor in England, nor in Japan. We do not have enough possibilities for counter-blockade. Counter-measures could be undertaken in Berlin.

Our plans did not include creation of our base here, on the American continent. In general, the policy of constructing bases on foreign territories is not a correct one. Such a policy was carried out in the time of Stalin. There was our base in Germany which was created on the ground of our right as conqueror. Currently our troops in Germany are quartered there according to the Warsaw Pact. Under treaty there was our naval base in Finland. We also had a base in Port Arthur in order to defend our eastern borders from Japan. All these bases were liquidated. Right now we don't have any bases on foreign territories. Nevertheless there are our troops in Poland in order to ensure communications with our forces in Germany, and Soviet troops are quartered in Hungary in order to protect us from the side of Austria. We do not need bases in Cuba for the destruction of the United States of America. We have long-range missiles which can be used directly from our territory. We do not have plans to conquer the territory of the USA. The working class of that country is stupefied by capitalist propaganda. Besides, such a plan would contradict our theory. We can use the long-range missiles only to deliver a retaliatory blow, with-

out landing troops on USA territory.

The objective of bringing Soviet troops and strategic weapons to Cuba consisted only in strengthening your defense potential. It was a deterrence plan, a plan designed to stop the imperialist play with fire regarding Cuba. If the strategic armaments were deployed under conditions of secrecy and if the Americans were not aware of their presence in Cuba, then it would have been a powerful means of deterrence. We proceeded from that assumption. Our military specialists informed us that strategic missiles can be reliably camouflaged in the palm forests of Cuba.

We were following very intently the transportation of troops and strategic weapons to Cuba. Those sea shipments were successful in July and August. And only in September the Americans learned about the transport of those forces and means. The USA intelligence worked badly. We were surprised that Kennedy in his speeches was speaking only about Soviet military specialists, but not Soviet troops. At the very beginning he really was thinking so. Then we understood that he was not saying everything he knew, and that he was holding back in order not to complicate the [Congressional—ed.] election campaign for himself. We let the Americans know that we wanted to solve the question of Berlin in the nearest future. This was done in order to distract their attention away from Cuba. So, we used a diversionary maneuver. In reality we had no intention of resolving the Berlin question at that time. If, comrades, the question of Berlin is of interest to you, I can give you the necessary information.

Kennedy addressed N.S. Khrushchev through confidential channels and made a request not to aggravate the situation until the end of the elections to Congress [on 6 November 1962—ed.], and not to proceed to the Berlin issue. We responded that we could wait until the end of the elections [campaign], but immediately after them we should proceed to the Berlin issue. When the Americans learned about the transport of strategic weapons to Cuba they themselves began crying a lot about Berlin. Both sides were talking about the Berlin crisis, but simultaneously believed that at that given moment the essence of their policy was located in Cuba.

By mid-September the Americans apparently received data regarding the transport to Cuba of Soviet troops and strategic missiles. I have already spoken about this fact with comrade Fidel Castro. The American intelligence was not the first in obtaining that information, it was West German intelligence who gave that information to the Americans. The American administration sent planes to the air space of Cuba for aerial photography and the ascertainment of the deployment areas of the strategic missiles. N.S. Khrushchev gave the order to place the missiles into vertical position only at night, but to maintain them in a lying-down position in the daytime.

Nevertheless, the Americans managed to take a photo of the missiles in the firing position. Kennedy didn't want to speak about Soviet missiles in Cuba until the end of the Congressional elections. He did not want to strain relations. But two Republican senators [a clear reference to Sens. Kenneth Keating of New York and Everett Dirksen of Illinois—ed.] learned about the fact of the strategic missiles placed in Cuba and therefore Kennedy hastened to take the initiative into his hands, or else he would be hardpressed. We had no information on how he intended to act.

The United States of America organized maneuvers in the area of Vieques Island [in the Caribbean], naming them "Ortsac," i.e., Castro, if you read it backwards. But those maneuvers could appear to be not an exercise, but a sea cover for a strong blow against Cuba. At that moment, when Kennedy made a statement and announced [on October 22—ed.] the decision of declaring a blockade against Cuba, we didn't know if the Americans were really carrying out maneuvers or were preparing for a direct attack upon Cuba.

On 28 October in the morning [presumably this refers to Moscow time, which would mean the evening of 27 October in Washington—ed.] we received reliable reports of preparations for an attack against Cuba. Indeed we were aware of the fact that the Americans had interrupted their maneuvers because of a hurricane. The maneuvers did not resume when the hurricane went away but the American combatant ships remained in the same area in direct proximity to Cuba. N.S. Khrushchev rebuked Kennedy for declaring a blockade around Cuba. We strongly opposed the American attempts to assume the right to determine what weapons Cuba can use and what armaments it may not possess. And then the Americans decided to carry out a direct aggression. Their plan consisted of two parts. Wishing to free themselves from the threat of a blow from the strategic missiles, they decided to liquidate the launchers in Cuba with the help of conventional warhead missiles and immediately after that land troops on Cuban territory in order to liquidate centers of resistance as soon as possible.

It would have been impossible for us in these circumstances not to repulse the aggression of the USA. This assault would mean an assault upon you and us, as far as in Cuba there were situated Soviet troops and strategic missiles. Inevitably, nuclear war would be unleashed as a result of such a collision. Certainly we would destroy America, our country would be strongly damaged too, but we have a larger territory. Cuba would have been destroyed first. Imperialists would do their best to liquidate Cuba.

The objective of all the measures undertaken by the Soviet Union was the defense of Cuba. It was necessary to determine our line of conduct. The loss of Cuba would mean a serious blow to the whole socialist camp. And exactly at the moment when we were pondering the ques-

tion of what to do in the created situation we received the communication from comrade Castro, it was on Sunday, that an aggression against Cuba would be unleashed in the next 24 hours. From other sources we were in possession of information that the USA aggression would begin in 10-12 hours. Despite the fact that these were separate sources, the information corresponded. Until the moment of the start of the USA aggression against Cuba remained 10-12 hours. It was necessary to use the art of diplomacy. Had we not been successful in this regard there would have been unleashed a war. We had to use diplomatic means.

Kennedy was making statements that he had nothing against the stationing in Cuba of Soviet weapons, even troops, but that placing strategic weapons in Cuba was evidence of preparations for an assault against the USA. Therefore the USA would defend itself. Considering that the missiles had been discovered and were no longer a means of deterrence we decided that for the sake of saving Cuba it was necessary to give an order to dismantle and return the strategic missiles to the Soviet Union and to inform Kennedy of this. You agreed with the withdrawal of strategic missiles from Cuba while leaving there all the other kinds of armaments. We managed to preserve all the forces and means which are necessary for the defense of the Cuban revolution even without strategic missiles which had been a means of deterrence, but they were discovered and therefore lost their significance. We have enough powerful missiles that can be used from our territory. Since Kennedy agreed with the retaining of Soviet troops in Cuba, the Cubans kept powerful armaments and anti-aircraft missiles, so we consider that he [Kennedy] also made a concession.

The statement of Kennedy about non-aggression against Cuba on the part of the USA and latinamerican countries also represents a concession. If we take into account these reciprocal concessions and all other factors, we will see that a big victory has been gained. Never before have the Americans made such a statement. That is why we decided that the main objective—salvation of Cuba—had been achieved. There would not be an assault against Cuba. There would not be a war. We are gaining more favorable positions.

Indeed, it was necessary to send the draft of our decision to Cuba in order to have consultations with you, to receive your consent and only then announce it. It would have been done in this way if there were normal conditions. In his letter Fidel Castro informed us that an inevitable aggression was expected in 24 hours. By the moment when we received it and were discussing the situation, only 10-12 hours were left before aggression. If we had tried to send you our draft we would have had to encode the document, transmit it by radio, decipher it, translate it into Spanish.

All of this could take more than 10 hours and such a consultation would not have made sense by that time. It would be too late. It could happen in such a way, that the answer would be received, but Cuba itself would have ceased to exist, a war would have been unleashed. It was a critical moment. We thought our Cuban friends would understand us. Moreover we knew from the cable from Fidel Castro that the Cuban leadership was aware of the direct threat of assault. At that moment the main objective consisted of preventing an attack. We thought, the Cuban comrades would understand us. Therefore, we made the decision to act immediately, but without paying due attention to the psychological factor, about which comrade Fidel Castro spoke here.

Regarding the possibility of a truce at that moment, mentioned by the Cuban comrades, the Americans would not take such a step in those conditions. There are a lot of revanchists in the Pentagon, and Kennedy is a deterrent element with respect to them. The Americans would have burst into Cuba. We had no time. Certainly, it was a decision that created some difficulties for you, the Cuban people.

Let us compare the situation at the present time and the situation before the crisis. Before the crisis the Americans were preparing an intervention against Cuba. Now they have committed themselves not to attack Cuba. It is a great success. Certainly, the events also had negative consequences, especially as American propaganda was trying suit their own ends by using some facts and distorting them. But that is inevitable. These are the costs of events that have crucial importance. Our task is to eliminate the negative consequences of the recent events.

Comrade Dorticos is correct when he asks why did we give our consent to Kennedy's message on non-aggression against Cuba without the concordance of the Cuban government. But it was exactly our consent (and nothing else) that ensured some truce for a certain time.

One cannot perceive nihilistically all agreements and commitments, although sometimes these agreements and commitments are important only during a certain time, until conditions change. So they keep their importance until the situation changes.

We were asked about our demand on the liquidation of American bases in Turkey.

Speaking frankly, we were not thinking about bases in Turkey at all. But during discussion of the dangerous situation we received information from the United States of America, including an article by [columnist Walter] Lippmann [in the *Washington Post* on October 25], where it was said that the Russians could raise the question of liquidating the USA bases in Turkey. They were speaking about the possibility of such a demand inside American circles. This question was discussed in the USA. Turkish bases do not have great importance for us. They will be eliminated

in case of war. True, they have certain political significance but we don't pay them special importance, though we will seek their liquidation.

From your statements I see now that the Cubans were regarding this demand as if it was some sort of exchange. There are USA bases not only in Turkey, but also in England and other European countries. But nowadays these bases do not have decisive importance insofar as the long-range strategic missiles, aimed at Europe, can quickly destroy them.

F. CASTRO. There is a question, on which we are insufficiently informed.

On 26 October the Soviet government sent Kennedy a letter without a word about Turkey. On 27 October we learned about Turkey from the broadcasts of Soviet radio. The American media expressed some surprise because this problem had not been raised in the message of the 26th. What is it, a false communication or were there two letters of 26 and 27 October? We have received one letter that coincided with the document transmitted by Moscow radio.

A.I. MIKOYAN. There were two letters. The letter of the 26th was not published. The letter of 27 October was published. But the content of the letter of 27 October covers the questions raised in the letter of the 26th. The question of Turkey was not raised at the beginning. Later this issue was included. You have all the correspondence on this issue. If there is such a necessity, we can check it.

F. CASTRO. Here is the letter of 26 October, whose text, as it seemed to me, is identical to the other letter at my disposal, which was received from the transmission of radio Moscow and TASS. It seemed to me that one letter has not been published.

A.I. MIKOYAN. If you want, we can check.

F. CASTRO. For all that, when did Kennedy accept the proposal of N.S. Khrushchev and promise guarantees not to attack Cuba? Wasn't it in response to the letter of 26 October? What did he say then?

C.R. RODRIGUEZ. There were secret letters.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Comrades, all the documents have been given to you.

F. CASTRO. On 27 October Kennedy gave guarantees not to attack Cuba, if the Soviet government removed its offensive weapons. The impression is growing that it was in response to [Khrushchev's] letter of 26 October. That is an important question. It was decided urgently, without consultations. Apparently, before my

letter to Khrushchev, N.S. Khrushchev wrote to Kennedy and simultaneously with my letter an answer from Kennedy to Khrushchev arrived. After all, why is Kennedy already speaking about the Soviet proposal about dismantling, etc., in his response of 27 October to Khrushchev's message of 26 October, if it was not directly said in the confidential message from Khrushchev of 26 October? Negotiations began at night, after the message from Kennedy. Consequently, it was not possible to consider inevitable an attack against us. When I was writing to N.S. Khrushchev I didn't know that Khrushchev was writing to Kennedy and Kennedy—to Khrushchev. It seems to me that on 27 October, at that time, there was no unavoidable threat of attack. The principle of agreement had already been found. It seems to me that there was available time for consultations.

A.I. MIKOYAN. In his answer of 27 October Kennedy was formally responding as if only to the confidential message of the 26th, but practically he was answering both this one and chiefly the message from Khrushchev of the 27th, openly transmitted by radio, though there was no direct reference in Kennedy's message. All the messages between Khrushchev and Kennedy and everything received from him confidentially were given to comrade Fidel. I'm a participant of all the meetings, I'm aware of everything, but if you want me to do it, I'll check all the documents that I have with me and tomorrow I'll complement my information.

F. CASTRO. I agree with comrade Mikoyan's suggestion.

A.I. MIKOYAN. So, let's pass to the next question.

To many Cubans it seems that instead of our demand for the liquidation of American bases in Turkey it would be better to put the question of the liquidation of the base in Guantanamo. Such a demand seems tempting from the Cuban political and practical points of view. But from the point of view of military and practical interests of Cuba we could not put the question in this way. If the question were raised about withdrawal from Cuba of all kinds of armaments, then the [Guantanamo] question would be raised. There are no nuclear weapons at Guantanamo. But we did not have intentions of taking away all the armaments from Cuba. The Guantanamo base does not have a huge real significance insofar as the Americans can transfer their forces to Cuba without difficulties due to the geographical situation of the USA and Cuba. Indeed, it was not possible to lose all our armaments in Cuba. If we were to raise the question of Guantanamo base liquidation in exchange for withdrawal of Soviet weapons from Cuban territory in general, that would undermine Cuba's defense capability. We

can't do that. You know that in the message from N.S. Khrushchev to Kennedy there was said that "we want to create confidence among Cubans, confirming that we are with them and we do not relieve responsibility for rendering help to the Cuban people."

F. CASTRO. But we are speaking only about strategic missiles. Such an act would have political rather than military significance. We were looking for an exit from that situation. It seems to us that it was possible to create a more difficult atmosphere for the Americans by raising such a question as the liquidation of the Guantanamo base.

A.I. MIKOYAN. If the Americans had accepted such an offer, and they could do so, we would have had to leave Cuba. We could not afford it.

Now I'll pass to the issue of inspections. If we had made a statement declining inspections, the Americans would have taken it for our desire to swindle them and their intervention would have become a reality. We declared that we agree to inspections. What we are speaking about is not a broad inspection, but a verification of the sites, known to the Americans due to aerial photography and which have been locations of the strategic missile launchers. The objective would have been to verify if the missiles had really been dismantled and their embarkation really accomplished; verification of the areas where the missiles had been assembled could be carried out in one day and verification of loading—in several days. It was not a question of any permanent or general inspection. It was said that representatives of neutral countries would carry out a verification only once. We were not deciding this question instead of you. Cuban issues are solved by the Cuban leadership only. But, being owners of that kind of weapon, we stated our consent for verification of dismantling and loading. We believed that after coordinating with you, you would accept this suggestion. But we could not decide it instead of you.

We were assuming that it was possible to give consent to verification by representatives of neutral countries of the dismantling and withdrawal of the missiles — doing all of this without hurting Cuba's sovereignty. Certainly, no state would bear violation of its sovereignty. But in particular cases sovereign governments also permit some limitation of their actions, owing to voluntary agreements. Now we are not speaking about those cases when foreign powers impose their will over other countries.

I can give examples how our state and other countries voluntarily limit their actions while preserving their sovereign rights. For example, sovereignty of a host-country does not apply to the territory of foreign embassies. In this case we see a limitation of actions without limitation of

sovereignty.

Another example. An agreement to create an international verification commission was achieved in Geneva [in 1954] during the discussion of the Indochina issue. The proposal was made by representatives of the Soviet Union, China, and other countries. The proposal was also supported by the leader of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam comrade Ho Chi Minh, who was directly concerned. Currently both Ho Chi Minh and the king of Cambodia ask to preserve that international verification commission. In this case there is no question of limiting the sovereign rights neither of Vietnam nor Cambodia.

Further. Between India and Pakistan in the area of Kashmir is working an international verification commission without infringing on their sovereign rights.

Several years ago we proposed [in May 1955—ed.] to the Americans and English to create jointly international verification posts on railway junctions, in large ports, and along highways. In due time [in the 1957 Rapacki Plan—ed.] we also suggested to organize international verification in the zone covering 800 kilometers on both sides along the demarcation line in Germany. In the event of the acceptance of this suggestion, a part of our territory, Poland, and Hungary would have been controlled. And such an act, under the condition of voluntary acceptance of the commitments, would not have undermined the sovereign rights of the states.

A similar example is the creation of an international commission in Laos in order to verify compliance of the 1962 agreement, in particular, to verify the withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos and a ban on the introduction of weapons. [Laotian Prince] Souvanna Phouma did not object to such a verification. Communists of Laos and Vietnam allowed international control, communists of India didn't object to international verification. Poland agreed to verify the withdrawal of American troops and the troops of Ho Chi Minh. And it was done with the consent of comrade Ho Chi Minh and the Laotian communists.

I'm giving you all these examples because when we, on the basis of the above mentioned experience, were thinking about you, we didn't pay due attention to that psychological factor, about which we learned here from comrade Fidel Castro. In principle everything is correct, but not all that looks good in principle can be applied to a concrete situation.

Everything I'm talking about I'm saying not to gain a change of the international stand of Cuba, but in order to explain to you the motives which guided us. It is unthinkable that I might try to exercise any pressure.

During the conversation with McCloy in New York I touched on the question of verification of the dismantling of our missiles. McCloy said that insofar as Cuba was objecting to verification organized with the help of neutral coun-

tries, the USA did not insist on this form of control and it was necessary to seek other measures so that the Americans could be convinced that it had been done. He said that they were aware of dismantling work, but they were afraid that the missiles could be hidden in Cuban forests. They need to be sure that those weapons are removed from Cuban territory. I asked him about other forms of verification that he had in mind. McCloy answered that, in their opinion, an aerial inspection could be used for this aim, but that it was necessary for Cuba to agree to verification from airspace. I resolutely said in response that such a method is out of the question because it was damaging Cuban sovereign rights. I added that it wasn't worth going on with the discussion of that issue—we categorically rejected such a method and stressed our reluctance even to convey that proposal to the Cubans.

We knew that the American planes had been flying over the territory of Cuba and had carried out air photography. I told McCloy that on the basis of that aerial photography Americans could be convinced of the fact that work on the dismantling of the missiles had already begun. He answered me that air photography reflected the process of dismantling work, but that was not all, because in their view there were delays in dismantling. McCloy underlined that for Americans it was very important to be sure of the removal of the missiles from Cuban territory. Then they would not have doubts of missiles being hidden in the forests. He added that the information is needed to be convinced of the missiles' withdrawal. Meanwhile the Americans do not seek any secret information, they are worried by the question of whether the missiles have been withdrawn.

I could not, continued A.I. Mikoyan, go on discussing that issue with McCloy, but I was aware that military consultants, a general and a colonel, had been sent from the Soviet Union to [Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily] Kuznetsov. I hope, the issue will be further examined.

There is another method which I didn't mention to the Americans, but I can explain it to you. The process of dismantling and loading of the strategic weapons can be photographed and these documents can be used in order to achieve the declared objective.

How is the verification at sea carried out? It is done at a considerable distance from territorial waters. Observers examine vessels and give their consent for further travel.

On 1 November, during my conversation with McCloy, I said nothing to the Americans regarding the fact that we were looking for ways to keep our promise and give the Americans the opportunity to be certain that the dismantling and carrying away of the missiles had really been done. We are doing that in order not to contradict your statement objecting to control on Cuban territory. During the conversation McCloy told

me that the Cubans could try to prevent the withdrawal from Cuba of the strategic missiles. He added that the Cubans had 140 thousand soldiers and Soviet troops are only 10 thousand. Regarding the first remark I told him that it was nonsense, because Fidel Castro himself had announced that he was not objecting to the withdrawal of the Soviet strategic missiles. Certainly, I didn't dispute his data on the numbers of the troops.

By the way, he said that the U-2 plane had been shot down over Cuban territory [on 27 October—ed.] by Russian missiles, though anti-aircraft launchers, in his opinion, could be operated by the Cubans. I neither confirmed, nor disputed, this observation of McCloy.

E. CASTRO. These planes are flying at the altitude of 22 thousand meters and the limit of our artillery is lower. Therefore it's understandable that in this case the anti-aircraft missiles were used.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I didn't engage in further discussion with him of this issue.

We insist on immediate lifting of the quarantine. If you want us to finish the withdrawal of strategic missiles from Cuba as soon as possible, I said to McCloy, then give the vessels access to Cuba because there are not enough steamships in Cuba right now to withdraw the equipment and personnel. It could be done before the official agreement, in order to accelerate the evacuation. McCloy responded that he was ready to give orders in practice not to carry out examination of the vessels. The verification will be completely formal, as happened during the encounter of the tanker "Bucharest" with American ships. A question was asked by radio about the character of the cargo and the "Bucharest" without examination continued its journey to Cuba. Nobody stopped the ship, nobody came on its deck.

I objected to this kind of verification also. Then we passed to other issues. [U.S. delegate to the United Nations Adlai] Stevenson told me that the Americans had accepted [UN Secretary General] U Thant's proposal. I reproached them and made the observation that U Thant was suggesting not to withdraw weapons and to lift the blockade. We accepted U Thant's suggestion about verification on the part of the Red Cross.

In general it is necessary to note that the cargo transportation to Cuba represent an interest for you, not us. You are receiving the goods. We incur considerable losses. Steamships are obliged to wait at sea. We were forced to agree to the Red Cross verification in order to reduce our losses. Such a verification is better than the American one. This organization does not have any political or state character. Vessels that can be used for such verification, are not American but neutral and Soviet.

U Thant suggested two options for verifica-

tion: in port and at sea. We didn't want to hurt your sentiments and therefore responded that we agree to verification at sea, but not in port. This issue, chiefly, has importance for you. But seeking to make your situation easier, we agreed to Red Cross verification at sea.

Having returned from Havana, U Thant told me in New York that you do not agree to verification in port although, in his opinion, it was more comfortable to do it in port. U Thant is ready to choose the corresponding staff. He has available two ships. On other details of this issue I lack information. Comrade Kuznetsov is in charge of them.

It's still necessary to dwell on the issue concerning U Thant's plan and verification.

During the crisis U Thant behaved himself decently, even well. It's hard to demand anything more from him. He treated both us and Cuba with sympathy, but his situation is not easy at all. We have received the "U Thant plan," of guarantees, that had been sent to everybody. This plan seemed interesting to us and useful for Cuba. What do we see positive in it?

If the UN observation posts are created in Cuba, the southern seacoast of the USA and in the Central American countries then attempts of preparation for aggression against Cuba would be quickly unmasked. In this way it will be possible to suppress rapidly any aggression attempts against Cuba. I'm assessing this issue from the point of view of international law. It's not excluded that a similar agreement can be violated, but it must not happen under normal conditions.

This issue is also interesting from another point of view. There is the Organization of American States (OAS). The Americans try to use the OAS as a cover in order not to allow a UN inspection. If the Americans had accepted UN inspection it would mean that Latin American issues are resolved at the UN bypassing the OAS. Briefly, we positively assess U Thant's plan. He said that Fidel Castro also had a positive attitude toward his plan, but I don't know if comrade Fidel Castro really has such an opinion.

U Thant told me that representatives of Latin-American countries, to whom he had spoken, took a favorable view of his plan. I asked what was the USA position and U Thant informed [me] that the Americans had called it an OAS issue without outlining their own attitude. But I managed to clear up this question during the conversation with McCloy. At first McCloy and Stevenson said that there was not a "U Thant plan." Then they admitted their knowledge of the plan, but declared that the USA opposes any verification procedures on their territory.

McCloy said they could pledge their word that all the camps for mercenary training in Central America had been liquidated or were in the process of liquidation. I asked McCloy if it had been done in all countries. McCloy answered that

it was necessary to check it. I asked why the USA recruits Cuban counter-revolutionaries to their armed forces. He prevaricated for a long time trying to explain it by the necessity of teaching those people English. He was cunning and evasive. Then he declared that Cuba represents "a source of revolutionary infection." Stevenson said that the USA would like to find a possibility for settling the Cuban issue, but Cuba is afraid of the USA and the USA is afraid of Cuba. We didn't discuss this question any more. But there is an impression that a possibility exists to reach an agreement—in the form of a declaration or some other form—between Cuba and Central American countries pledging not to carry out subversive work and not to attack each other.

Comrade Fidel Castro was right saying that it was necessary to maneuver on the issues of international policy. It is easier for the Soviet Union than for Cuba to do so, especially when American propaganda complicates your possibilities for maneuvers. Firmness should be combined with flexibility while you carry out a policy. Nowadays it is a necessary thing for marxist-diplomats. It is wrong to say that we are more liberal than others. We are firm, but we display flexibility when it is necessary.

The revolution in Cuba has enormous importance not only for the Cuban people, but for the countries of Latin America and the whole world. The revolution in Cuba must develop and strengthen. Therefore it is necessary to use maneuvers, to display flexibility in order to ensure victory.

Really, a victory has been gained over Americans and here is why. If we have a look at the whole thing retrospectively, the question is being raised—if it has been a mistake to send strategic missiles to Cuba and to return them to the Soviet Union. The CC CPSU considers that there was no mistake. The strategic missiles have done their part. Cuba found itself at the center of international politics and now when their job is done, when they have been discovered, they can't serve any more as means of deterrence. They are withdrawn. But the Cuban people keep powerful arms in their hands. There is no other country in Latin America which is so strong militarily, which has such a high defense potential as Cuba. If there is no direct aggression on the part of the USA, no group of Latinamerican countries has the possibility to overpower Cuba.

Let us try to understand, of what does our victory consist. Let's compare situations in June and now, in November. The Americans have virtually forgotten the Monroe doctrine. Kennedy does not mention it any more and, you know, the Monroe doctrine has been the basis of American imperialism in Latin America. Previously Americans were declaring that they would not tolerate a Marxist regime on the American continent. Now they are committing themselves not to attack Cuba. They were saying that foreign powers

could not be present on the American continent in whatever form. They know about the Soviet military in Cuba, but do not speak of the Monroe doctrine.

Cuba found itself in the center of international political events. The United Nations Organization is engaged in the Cuban issue. U Thant practically backs Cuba and comes out against the USA policy. And you remember that previously it was not possible to obtain support for Cuba at the UN. World public opinion has been mobilized and even some nations who were previously against Cuba.

In the USA there are hysterics, but in their souls many people understand the fairness of the Cuban demands.

In the end, the prestige of the socialist camp has strengthened. It defended peace, though the USA was rapidly sliding down toward war.

People have united in order to resist American plans aimed at unleashing a war, and simultaneously the Soviet policy was carried out in the framework of settling the issues by peaceful means.

The immediate threat of military attack against Cuba is gone. I believe it is moved aside for several years.

It is necessary now to fix that success on the diplomatic field, so that Cuba—a beacon of Latin American revolution—could develop more rapidly in every respect and give a decisive example for mobilizing other peoples for struggle.

Our support becomes more and more active. We are helping you as our brothers. More possibilities have been created.

Americans are obliged to take Cuba into account, to solve issues, regarding Cuba, with our participation. We are not speaking about Russia [sic—ed.] as such, but as a country of socialism. Socialism, which you are also meritoriously representing, became a decisive factor of international policy. American propaganda is repeating over and over again about a diminishing of Cuba's prestige. Just to the contrary Cuba's prestige has been undoubtedly strengthened as a result of recent events.

In conclusion A.I. Mikoyan apologized to the Cuban comrades for having tired them out. Joking he adds that the only compensation is that he is worn out too. So there is complete equality.

He suggests to set the time of the next meeting.

F. CASTRO asked, if it was possible, to discuss Soviet policy regarding the Berlin issue.

A.I. MIKOYAN answered that he would do so, and also would discuss the exchange of letters between the CPSU and communist parties of India and China on the issue of conflict between India and China. He can explain our plans in the sphere of disarmament, on the ceasing of tests of hydrogen weapons, and answer all other ques-

tions including economic issues.

It was decided to have another meeting in the Presidential Palace at 14 hours [2 pm—ed.] on 5 November.

Ambassador Alekseev was also present on the Soviet side.

Recorded by V. Tikhmenev

[signature]

[Source: Russian Foreign Ministry archives, obtained and translated by NHK television, copy provided by Philip Brenner; translation by Aleksandr Zaemsky slightly revised.]

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Document III:

**“I don't understand such a sharp reaction”
—The Third Castro-Mikoyan Conversation,
5 November 1962 (afternoon)**

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

A.I. MIKOYAN with Fidel CASTRO, Oswaldo PORTICOS, Raul CASTRO, Ernesto GUEVARA and Carlos Rafael RODRIGUEZ

5 November 1962

A conversation between A.I. Mikoyan and the same composition of the Cuban leadership, as on the previous occasion, took place on 5 November, at the Presidential palace. The conversation lasted 2 hours 30 minutes.

During the previous meeting F. Castro asked comrade Mikoyan a question which showed his doubts as if we had not given him all the messages from N.S. Khrushchev to president Kennedy. He asked how the statement of Kennedy of 27 October could be explained, insofar as there was already a reference to our consent to dismantle ground launchers for special equipment.

Comrade Mikoyan answered Castro that all confidential letters from N.S. Khrushchev had been given to the Cuban comrades and the open messages are known to them from the media. No other letters have been sent from N.S. Khrushchev to Kennedy, said Mikoyan.

In order to render the trend of developments more precisely, A.I. MIKOYAN suggested, to answer that question during consecutive conversation, that is on 5 November, after looking through the whole correspondence on this issue once more.

In the conversation [on 5 November], A.I. MIKOYAN said that the correspondence between N.S. Khrushchev and Kennedy had been looked through again, and the motives, which had prompted Kennedy to refer to our consent about the dismantling of the missiles, had been determined. You are aware of the content of all the

messages from N.S. Khrushchev to Kennedy and I would like to say that Kennedy in his letter of 27 October, which attracted your attention, formally is answering the confidential message of N.S. Khrushchev of 26/X [26 October], but in essence he is simultaneously responding to Khrushchev's letter of 27/X [27 October], which had been published even before the aforementioned response from Kennedy and in which we had raised the question of dismantling the ground launchers in Cuba under the condition of liquidating the American base in Turkey. You have been given all the correspondence between N.S. Khrushchev and Kennedy except for one confidential message from Kennedy of 25 October, which is not connected to the issue of dismantling and only accuses us of denying the fact of the construction of ground launchers for special equipment in Cuba. We can read it out and then give you the translation. (The letter is read out.)

FIDEL CASTRO. Thank you. Now this issue is clear to me.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I'll continue. Having received that message we answered it on 26 October through confidential channels. In that letter there were no concrete proposals yet. We were speaking only about the necessity to eliminate the threat of an assault against Cuba. The letter included only the idea of seeking an agreement. We didn't receive an answer from Kennedy on the 26th. There was no answer on the morning of 27 October either. We came to the conclusion that the Americans were actively preparing for an attack, but were preferring not to disclose their plans before world public opinion. Therefore, in order to tie the Americans' hands, we decided to send Kennedy a new letter and publish it in the press. That was the letter of 27 October, known to you, where the demand for the liquidation of the American bases in Turkey was advanced. We published this letter very quickly, even before the American ambassador received its text. Our objective was to forestall the Americans and frustrate their plans. Only then we received a message from Kennedy. It was sent on the evening of 27 October. We received it on 28 October toward the morning (the time difference [between Washington and Moscow—ed.] must be taken into consideration). This letter by its form seemed to be an answer to the confidential message from N.S. Khrushchev of 26 October, but in effect it was the response to the letter of 27 October. On 28 October in the morning, having received the letter from comrade Fidel Castro, and having at our disposal other data about preparations for an attack literally in the nearest hours, N.S. Khrushchev made an open radio statement that the Soviet officers had received orders to dismantle and evacuate the strategic missiles. As you understand, there was no time for consultations with the Cuban government. By publishing

the messages we had the possibility to send them quickly to Cuba, but we could not wait for an answer because it would take a lot of time to encode, decipher, translate, and transmit them.

Acting in this way, we were proceeding from our conviction that the most important objective in that situation was to prevent an attack against Cuba. I would like to underline that our proposals to dismantle the strategic missiles and to liquidate the American bases in Turkey had been advanced before receiving the letter from comrade Fidel Castro of 27 October. The order for the dismantling of the strategic missiles and their evacuation was given after we had received the letter from Kennedy of 27 October and the letter from Fidel Castro. In our message of 28 October, as you have noted, the demand for the liquidation of bases in Turkey was no longer suggested. We did this because we were afraid that in spite of our proposal of 27 October the American imperialists could assault Cuba. We had nothing else to do but to work on the main task—to prevent an attack against Cuba, believing that our Cuban friends would understand the correctness of our actions, although the normal procedure of coordination had not been observed.

The question was that there were 24 hours left before an assault against Cuba. It must be taken into consideration that we had only a few [literally, “counted”—ed.] hours at our disposal and we could not act other than we did. And there are results: an attack against Cuba is prevented, the peace is preserved. However you are right that the procedure of consultations, which is possible under normal circumstances, was not followed.

F. CASTRO. I would like to respond to comrade Mikoyan.

We have listened with great attention to the information and explanations offered by comrade Mikoyan. Undoubtedly all those explanations are very valuable because they help us to understand better the course of events. We are thankful for the desire to explain everything to us, for the efforts undertaken in this regard. The arguments, that the strategic missiles after being discovered by the enemy practically lost whatever military significance or their significance becomes extremely small, also cause no doubts among us.

We are grateful for all these explanations and do understand, that the intentions of the Soviet government cannot be assessed only on the grounds of an analysis of the most recent developments, especially as the atmosphere is rapidly changing and new situations are created. The totality of adopted decisions, which became the basis for supplying strategic weapons and the signing of [the Soviet-Cuban—ed.] agreement, must be taken into consideration. It was supposed to publish that agreement after the installation of the strategic missiles and after the elec-

tions in the USA. These decisions are testimony to the firm resolution of the Soviet Union to defend Cuba. They help to understand correctly the policy of the Soviet Union. Therefore, I repeat, an analysis of the USSR position can be correct only with due regard for all the events and decisions both before and during the crisis.

We do not doubt that if all the works on the assembly of the strategic weapons had been completed in conditions of secrecy then we would have received a strong means of deterrence against American plans for attacking our country. In this way objectives would have been achieved which are pursued both by the Soviet government and the government of the Republic of Cuba. However, we consider that the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba was significant for the interests of the whole socialist camp. Even if we consider it to be a military advantage, it was politically and psychologically important in the struggle for the deterrence of imperialism and the prevention of its aggressive plans. Thus, the installation of the strategic missiles in Cuba was carried out not only in the interests of the defense of Cuba, but of the whole socialist camp. It was done with our complete consent.

We understood perfectly well the significance of this action and we considered it to be a correct step.

We also completely agree that war must be prevented. We do not object that the measures undertaken were in pursuit of two objectives, that is—to prevent an attack against Cuba and to avoid starting a world war. We completely agree with these aims pursued by the Soviet Union.

Misunderstanding arose in connection with the form of discussion of this issue. However, we understand that the circumstances were demanding urgent actions and the situation was abnormal. Assessing past events, we come to the conclusion that the discussion of these sharp questions could be carried out in another form. For example, the issue, which we have already discussed here, in regard to my letter in connection with the decision of the Soviet government and the publication of the Soviet government statement of 28 October. True, my letter bore no relation to issues mentioned in the messages of 26 and 27 October between the Soviet government and the USA Administration. Such a letter [from Castro to Khrushchev—ed.] pursued one objective—to inform the Soviet government about the inevitability of an assault against Cuba. There was not a word about any minor hesitation on our side. We clearly declared our resolve to fight. Besides, we didn't say that we were expecting an invasion. We wrote that it was possible, but not so likely. In our opinion, more probable was an air attack with the sole aim of destroying the strategic weapons in Cuba. The basis of the Soviet government decision of 28 October had already been reflected in the message to Kennedy of 26 October and clearly manifested itself in the

letter from N.S. Khrushchev to Kennedy of 27 October. In those two documents there is the real basis for the decision announced in the letter of 28 October. So, Kennedy's letter of 27 October meant acceptance of proposals by N.S. Khrushchev of 26 October consisting of his consent to evacuate from Cuba not only strategic armaments, but all the weapons if the USA stops threatening Cuba with an attack. Because the threat on the part of the USA had been the only reason that forced Cuba to arm itself. When Kennedy accepted this proposal (we didn't know that he was accepting it), the conditions were created to develop the Soviet proposals and prepare a declaration regarding the agreement of the parties. The USA could have been told that the USSR was ready to dismantle the equipment but would like to discuss it with the Cuban government. In our opinion the issue should have been solved in this way instead of giving immediately an order to evacuate the strategic weapons. Such a procedure would have lessened international tension and secured the possibility to discuss the issue with the Americans in more favorable conditions. In this way it could have been possible not only to achieve a lessening of international tension and to discuss the issue in better conditions, but also to achieve the signing of a declaration.

It is only a simple analysis of previous events that does not have special importance right now.

Nowadays it is important for us to know what to do under the new conditions. In what way shall we seek to achieve our main goals and at the same time fight to prevent an aggression and preserve peace. Certainly, if in due course we manage to secure a lasting peace, then we'll have an opportunity to better assess the undertaken steps in light of new facts. Future results of our struggle will demonstrate the importance of today's events. Certainly, only a little bit in this struggle depends on us personally.

We are very grateful for all the explanations given to us by comrade Mikoyan, for all the efforts undertaken by him in order to make us understand the recent events. We take into consideration the special conditions under which it was necessary to act. We have no doubts regarding the friendly character of our relations, based on common principles. Our respect for the Soviet Union is unshakeable. We know that it respects our sovereignty and is ready to defend us from an aggression on the part of imperialism. Therefore, the most important thing now is to determine our joint steps.

I would like to assure you, comrade Mikoyan, of our complete trust.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I'm deeply satisfied by the statement of comrade Fidel Castro. We have always been confident of our sincere friendship which nothing can disrupt. I'll transmit word by

word your statement to the CC CPSU and I'm sure that it will produce gladness on the part of the Central Committee.

I would like to make a small explanation, very briefly.

I agree completely with the assessment, made by comrade Fidel Castro of his own letter. He is interpreting it correctly. It's a legitimate question raised by him—could we have made another decision instead of [sending] instructions for dismantling the strategic weapons[?] But we had been informed that an attack against Cuba would begin within the next few hours. Perhaps it was really intended to deliver a blow first of all against the strategic missile sites, but it would be followed by a strike against Cuba. We had to act resolutely in order to frustrate the plan of attack on Cuba. We realize that by doing this we had to sacrifice the necessity of consultations with the Cuban government.

Regarding comrade Fidel Castro's opinion that in the letter from N.S. Khrushchev to Kennedy of 26 October, there was a promise to withdraw from Cuba all the weapons and all military specialists. The Americans did not demand from us such a step. The issue was the offensive weapons. Perhaps comrade Fidel Castro made such a conclusion on the basis of the phrase where a withdrawal of technical specialists was mentioned. But this implied specialists who operate strategic missiles. The fact that it regarded only them is confirmed by all the letters, by the totality of their context. They were about offensive weapons only.

FIDEL CASTRO confirms, that his understanding was just the same.

A.I. MIKOYAN. It is no coincidence that in his answer to this letter Kennedy does not raise the question of removing from Cuba all the weapons. If such a proposal had been present in our letter, Kennedy would undoubtedly have taken advantage of it. Therefore the opinion, outlined by comrade Fidel Castro regarding this part, is incorrect. There is nothing of the kind in the letters of 27 and 28 October.

I would like to mention, that the Americans are trying to broaden the list of weapons for evacuation. Such attempts have already been made, but we will not allow them to do so. On our part, we gave our consent only to withdraw strategic weapons. When I was speaking to McCloy he told me with a smile that it would be good if we removed from Cuba the anti-aircraft missiles, too. But those are defensive weapons, not offensive.

Half an hour before my departure from New York, those pilferers (now we are speaking about Stevenson) sent a letter to comrade Kuznetsov, saying that they supposedly had forgotten to raise questions about some kinds of weapons. They were referring to the IL-28 bombers and

“Komar” [“Mosquito”] patrol boats. Stevenson wrote that it would be necessary to discuss that issue. Immediately I told comrade Kuznetsov that this issue was not a subject for discussion. These bombers have low speed and low altitude limits. Nor can the “Komar” patrol boats operate at great distance. Therefore those weapons are clearly defensive.

In the first Kennedy message [possibly an allusion to Kennedy's October 22 speech, which included a reference to the bombers—ed.] the American administration spoke about the bombers, later this question fell away. Now they want to raise again this question. We have resolutely rejected such a discussion. Comrade Kuznetsov received corresponding instructions from Moscow. This is nothing more than attempts to complicate the whole matter in order to create once again a tense atmosphere and dangerous situation.

Let me specify the list sent by Stevenson. Here it is. There are mentioned: bombers, “Komar” patrol boats, “air-to-surface” bombs and missiles, “sea-to-surface” and “surface-to-surface” projectiles [cruise missiles—ed.]. The Americans are impertinently continuing their attempts to complicate the situation.

It is very important to have a document of agreement, which one can use at the UN. It can be carried through the UN with the help of U Thant. But for that it is necessary to have evidence proving the dismantling and evacuation of weapons. Then the situation would improve. The earlier it is done, the more advantageous it will be for us.

For the Americans it is better to postpone the solution of this question. In this case they have the possibility to continue the quarantine and other aggressive actions. We would rather help U Thant in order to give him a chance to report to the UN that the Soviet side has carried out the dismantling and evacuation of offensive weapons from Cuba. We should talk about it.

We have resolutely rejected the American demand for aerial inspection. Nevertheless, with the help of air photography the Americans collected data that the dismantling of the strategic weapons had concluded and published that information by themselves. U Thant could have informed the UN, but he needs evidence, proving the evacuation of the weapons. UN representatives must see how the evacuation is carried out and inform U Thant on the results of their observation mission. Then the situation will become significantly simpler. The issue will be sent to the Security Council where the decisions are taken not only by the USA representatives.

I'm not insisting that you answer this question right now. Maybe you can do it tomorrow. If it would be acceptable for you, why, for example, not give consent for U Thant's representatives to verify how the weapons' loading onto Soviet ships is carried out. You know that different

international commissions or representatives of foreign powers often operate at sea ports and that fact does not limit the sovereignty of the host country in the slightest measure. Such a possibility would allow U Thant to consider accomplished the decision to withdraw the strategic missiles from Cuba. These observers would be given the opportunity to visit Soviet ships, anchored at the ports, to verify the fact of the armaments' removal. From my point of view that would not represent any infringement of national sovereignty.

Socialist countries, insofar as we are marxist-leninists, have to find a way of securing a unity of actions even in those cases when our opinions are somewhat different. Moreover, I believe, it would be taken into consideration that there are Soviet troops on Cuban territory. Therefore, our cooperation in the fight against imperialism must be especially effective. You may respond to this proposal [of mine] maybe not today, but tomorrow; in general, it seems to me that it is a minimum concession which would allow U Thant to present a report to the Security Council about the evacuation of the missiles. In the contrary case we will inevitably hear at the Security Council that the Cubans do not permit verification to be conducted, and that the Russians are only talking about control. But if the Security Council is given the opportunity to establish compliance of the promise of N.S. Khrushchev, then the quarantine may be lifted. The stage of diplomatic negotiations will begin. Roughly such an appeal was put forth by U Thant during his conversation with me. I ask you to discuss this proposal. I believe that the solution of this problem will help create definite conditions to settle the crisis situation which had developed in the Caribbean sea.

The Americans would like to delay the solution of this issue. Dragging it out gives them the opportunity to prolong the term of the quarantine. We told the Americans that we would be able to evacuate the weapons in 10 days. They are not in a hurry and say that it could take even a month. It is advantageous for the USA to preserve tension in this area. And we are standing for a lessening of tension, in order to solve this question at the Security Council. In our view, it's difficult for the Security Council to discuss this issue until the end of the USA elections. The elections will be held tomorrow and so it would be appropriate to think about its solution. It's very important to keep U Thant on our side. It seemed to me that he was very satisfied by his meeting with comrade Fidel Castro. But if we delay the solution, the Americans will seize the opportunity for their benefit.

C.R. RODRIGUEZ. So, if I understand you correctly, the question is about verification of loading at the Cuban ports as a minimum demand and the Americans would consider such a control a sufficient guarantee? Won't they later demand

an on-site verification, in the forests? I'm afraid if we go along such route we can even reach an inspection on site, where the strategic missiles previously have been located.

A.I. MIKOYAN. The imperialists are not the point. Such a verification is necessary for us. If the imperialists protest we can send them to hell. But it's necessary to take into consideration that the support of U Thant is very important for us, and the imperialists can say what they want. We'll send them to hell, the more so as they have already been convinced of the dismantling of the missiles with the help of air photography. If we manage to come to an agreement over verifications on ships, then the UN representatives will be able to control the process of loading also. We will not accept any more. Indeed, appetite comes with eating, but we will resolutely oppose such a rise of appetite, we'll do a step forward and that's enough for them. We rejected inspection, we didn't allow surface verification, we won't permit control over dismantling. But in order to strengthen our position at the UN, the representatives of this organization should be given the facts. Otherwise it will be difficult to restrain revanchists at the Security Council. But if the evacuation of weapons would be carried out and verified, then we'll obtain the lifting of the quarantine. I think, we should not put the sign of equality between the UN and the American imperialists. The matter is that the UN cannot exceed the limits settled by the two messages. If we manage to receive support from the UN, then the Americans would go to hell. We promised to allow verification of the evacuation. That verification can be organized by means of the UN. We didn't pledge anything else. But if we do not fulfill our promise, the situation may become considerably complicated. Perhaps you will discuss this issue without our presence and at the same time consider the possibilities of our further joint actions. If you find the opportunity we can meet today. However the meeting can be held tomorrow.

F. CASTRO. And what will the inspection look like?

A.I. MIKOYAN. Representatives of U Thant will arrive at the port of loading. Currently there are 4-5 ships assigned for that purpose. Then they'll climb on board. They will be shown the cargo and given corresponding information. In this way they will be convinced that we are fulfilling our promise and will go away. That is my understanding of this form of verification. If we come to an agreement regarding this proposal, I'll inform our representative to the UN and then we'll have the opportunity to settle the technique and procedure of this work.

I would be able to inform Moscow that we agreed to give both U Thant and the UN informa-

tion necessary to declare the verification to be carried out.

F. CASTRO. Isn't it possible to do the same on open sea?

A.I. MIKOYAN. The form of loading verification is more suitable for U Thant. It is not hurting your sovereignty either, because the verification will be carried out not on your territory, but aboard our ship.

F. CASTRO. I understand very well the interest in keeping U Thant on our side. But such an inspection will undoubtedly have a painful effect on the moral condition of our people. The Americans are insisting that the agreement on verification has been achieved by the exchange of messages. And, indeed, in the letter from Khrushchev to Kennedy of 28 October, it is said: "As I informed you in the letter of 27 October, we are prepared to reach agreement to enable United Nations representatives to verify the dismantling of these means."

Therefore it implies representatives of the Security Council for the mission of verification of dismantling on the site.

In the message of N.S. Khrushchev it is said, that consent would obviously be needed on the part of the governments of Cuba and Turkey in order to organize control of compliance of undertaken commitments. That means that N.S. Khrushchev in his letter of 28 October, is making reference to the message of the 27th. The necessity of obtaining consent on the part of Cuba is mentioned there, but that is not a responsibility of the Soviet Union, insofar as the USSR has already warned in the letter of 27 October, that the permission of the Cuban government is needed.

Comrade Mikoyan is saying that the imperialists could be sent to hell.

On 23 October I received a very clear letter where the precise position of the Soviet government is explained. Kennedy's statement is characterized therein as an unprecedented interference into internal affairs, as a violation of international law and as a provocative act. The Republic of Cuba, like all sovereign states, has the right to reject control and decide by itself what kinds of weapons it requires. No sovereign state must give an account of such actions. These concepts of the letter of 23 October are very precise and correctly reflected our position.

One more question. The formula that foresees UN observers in Cuba, in the USA, Guatemala and other countries seems to me a more reasonable verification. A unilateral inspection would affect monstrously the moral spirit of our people. We made big concessions. The American imperialists are carrying out aerial photography freely and we do not impede them due to the appeal of the Soviet government. It is necessary to look for some other formula. I would like to

explain to comrade Mikoyan that what I'm saying reflects the decision of the whole Cuban people. We will not give our consent for inspection. We don't want to compromise Soviet troops and endanger peace in the whole world. If our position imperils peace in the whole world, then we would rather consider the Soviet side to be free of its commitments and we would defend ourselves. Come what may. We have the right to defend our dignity.

O. DORTICOS. The statement voiced by comrade Fidel Castro reflects our common resoluteness and we consider that this issue does not deserve further discussion.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I don't understand such a sharp reaction to my proposal. What we were speaking about was not an inspection of Cuban territory, but a verification procedure in the ports. Foreign representatives can be found in any port. It does not have anything to do with aerial or surface inspection. I'm saying that not to call into question your statement, but in order to explain.

Besides the issue we have just finished discussing, we were going—according to your proposal—to talk over a plan of joint actions. We can have such a discussion not now, but at a time convenient for you.

F. CASTRO. On the basis of yesterday's meeting we came to the conclusion that the Soviet government understood the reasons for our resoluteness not to allow a verification of Cuban territory. That resoluteness is a starting-point for us. We proceeding from the same point regarding joint actions as well. It's difficult to talk about them, if we have not come to an agreement on the previous issue.

That issue is the most important from Cuba now from a political point of view. The guarantees are very problematic. It is not peace that we are speaking about. But inspection is a component of their strategy in the struggle against the Cuban revolution. The American position is weaker. The journal "Time" wrote that the dismantling was proceeding rapidly. Verification in the ports and at sea is just the same. But verification in the ports is very insulting for us from the political point of view and we cannot fulfill this demand of the USA administration.

A.I. MIKOYAN. My proposal was regarding not the Cuban territory, but only the Soviet ships, vessels are considered to be territory of that state, whom they belong to. Such a proposal I put forward on my personal behalf. Moscow did not entrust me to suggest it. Speaking frankly, I considered that insofar as such a verification did not regard Cuban territory, but Soviet ships, it could be accepted. I was saying that although we understand the Cuban position, the verification procedures were not dangerous. I don't under-

stand your reaction to my proposal.

Our Central Committee entrusted me to explain in detail the Soviet position on all the issues that are of interest to the Cuban comrades, entrusted me neither to impose our opinion, nor pressure you in order to obtain consent for inspection of the Cuban territory.

F. CASTRO. But verification would be carried out from the Cuban territory.

A.I. MIKOYAN. No, it could be carried out only aboard the ships. For that purpose Soviet and neutral country ships could be used. The UN representatives could live and sleep aboard those steamers.

F. CASTRO. Such a verification in the ports does not differ from control on ships on open sea.

A.I. MIKOYAN. There is no doubt that a verification can be carried out on open sea too, but does not bear relation to Cuba.

O. DORTICOS. It seems to me that now we should interrupt our work. We can agree upon further meetings through Ambassador Alekseev.

Ambassador Alekseev was also present on the Soviet side.

Recorded by V. Tikhmenev
[signature]

[Source: Russian Foreign Ministry archives, obtained and translated by NHK television, copy provided by Philip Brenner; translation (by Aleksandr Zaemsky) has been slightly revised.]

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Document IV:

**“The USA wanted to destroy us physically, but the Soviet Union with Khrushchev’s letter destroyed us legally”—
Mikoyan’s Meeting with Cuban Leaders,
5 November 1962 (evening)**

Copy

Top Secret

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

A.I. Mikoyan with Oswaldo Dorticos, Ernesto Guevara, and
Carlos Rafael Rodriguez

Evening 5 November 1962

After mutual greetings, Com. Dorticos said

that Fidel Castro had not been able to come because he is feeling poorly.

A.I. MIKOYAN expressed his sympathy in regard to the fact that F. Castro is feeling under the weather.

O. DORTICOS. We have analyzed Comrade Mikoyan’s latest proposals regarding verification of the loading of the strategic missiles on the decks of Soviet ships in Cuban ports. Our opinion is thus: keeping in mind chiefly the maintenance of the high moral spirit of our people and, besides that, wishing not to allow the outbreak of legal arguments in relation to the issue of the extraterritoriality of the ships, we want to give a conclusive answer to Comrade Mikoyan. We believe that it is impossible to accept that proposal. We must refuse it, since in principle we do not allow inspections, not on Cuban territory, nor in our airspace, nor in our ports.

After we have finished our consideration of the issues which concern us, we could move to a consideration of our tasks in the near future. We would like for the new steps which stand before us to be agreed with the Soviet government. We believe that after the elections in the USA it will be possible to make a joint statement of the Soviet government and the government of Cuba or to make separate, but simultaneous statements.

The Cuban government unilaterally will declare that it opposes any surveillance of its territory, airspace and ports aimed at inspection of the dismantling and removal of “offensive” weapons. However, we are ready to consider U Thant’s proposal about the possibility of inspection or verification on Cuban territory under the condition of a simultaneous inspection on the territory of the USA, Guatemala and in other countries of the Caribbean basin upon the coming into force of an agreement on the liquidation of the conflict in this region. Of course, we have no right to oppose inspection on the open seas. That is not in our competence. We would like Comrade Mikoyan to understand why we oppose inspections in Cuba. It is not just a matter of thoughts of legal procedure. The political side of the issue also has great significance. Such is our position.

There are other issues of concern to us, but we would not want to mix them up with the current question. Therefore we would be glad to hear Comrade Mikoyan’s opinion.

A.I. MIKOYAN. The variant which includes inspection on ships which are being loaded—that is my initiative. I have already told you that I had no authority to put forth that proposal. We understand your position. It seems to me that we have made our position clear to you. We are informing the CC CPSU and the Soviet government about your position on this issue. As far as a declaration is concerned, then I don’t see the point for either you or we to make a declaration

on the first point, especially since that has already been loudly declared by the Cuban leadership. Second, the publication of separate declarations would reveal the disagreements between us on this question, and that would be disadvantageous for both sides.

When I spoke about the necessity of thinking through our joint positions, I did not have inspections in mind. We must think about the entire complex of measures, both in the sphere of diplomacy and in all other spheres, so as to satisfy our common interests. Whether it will be in the form of a protocol or a declaration is not so important. The main thing is not the form, not the points, rather it is the position from which we can speak to U Thant and the UN. It follows that we should come to an agreement on our position, so as to make possible unity of actions. Concerning disagreements on the control issue, I don’t see the point of making a declaration on that issue and continuing its consideration after the speech of comrade Fidel Castro. However, I have already spoken about that. I think that we will not make a declaration on that topic and we will respect each other’s position, maintaining our own opinions on this issue.

Concerning the proposals about inspections in the USA and other countries of the Caribbean Sea, this proposal accords with the plans of U Thant, we support it, and we can envisage it in the draft of the protocol which we will propose to the Americans. To this point it is mentioned there in a somewhat general form. I spoke about it with U Thant, since this question seemed interesting to us. Although the Americans may support such a proposal regarding to other countries, they will not allow observers at home. If you agree with this point in the draft of the protocol, then it could occupy a place in our joint proposals.

On the basis of a conversation with U Thant I came to the conclusion that a coordinated declaration will not satisfy the Americans and that they will call for declarations from each of the sides. However, form is not the main thing. It is necessary to coordinate our positions so that both our and your representatives in New York could act in a coordinated manner.

The draft of the document with which you are familiar is not limited to U Thant’s plan, but it would still be possible to revise it. U Thant has said that it would be possible to make more concrete the part of the document in which the plan for the presence of the UN in the Caribbean Sea region is noted. U Thant, referring to such states like the USA, Cuba, and a range of other states of Central America, believes it would be possible to do this. This could be done in the text. This issue of coordinated observation by representatives of the UN on the territory of the USA, Cuba, and other countries of Central America could be reflected in the protocol. In this case we would be starting from a common position. However, thus far we do not know your attitude to the

given document.

Comrade Kuznetsov, who is located in New York, asked me to find out the opinion of the Cuban comrades. Not knowing your opinion, Comrade Kuznetsov has been deprived of opportunities to speak with U Thant and the Americans.

A.I. ALEKSEEV. This would give us the possibility to work out a common position in regard to other articles of the protocol as well.

O. DORTICOS. We reviewed the text of the protocol immediately after it was given to us, i.e., even before the conversation with Comrade Mikoyan. We have no fundamental objections. It seems to me that in the protocol there is one article about an inspection in Cuba. It would make sense to work out the issue of the conduct of a one-time observation both in Cuba and in the United States and in other countries of Central America. In view of the information which was given by Com. Mikoyan yesterday, we believe that we will not have any major objections to the document.

C.R. RODRIGUEZ. I have doubts whether the proposed formula regarding the fact that the USA is obliged to secure inspections in Central American countries is lawful.

E. GUEVARA. That formula really causes doubts.

A.I. MIKOYAN. It is still possible to do some serious editing work.

Despite the fact that the Americans may not accept the proposals contained in the document, it will be advantageous for us to have a common position and to link it with U Thant's plan. Even if the Americans will be against it. The inspection will not be unilateral, it will be multilateral, so it evidently doesn't bother you. Whether or not the document will be accepted, it can still have great significance.

The idea belongs to U Thant. It is possible to specify the list of countries which will be listed in this document. For example, Cuba, the USA, Guatemala and others. It seems to me that it makes sense to think over this issue. It would be an advantageous position. The Americans will be opponents of such a proposal, since they do not want to allow inspections on the territory of the USA. However, even our posing of this issue will have great political significance. It is difficult to say how this will end, but the struggle for acceptance of these proposals should bring us a victory.

In this way we see that the protocol does not prompt objections if does not speak about the necessity of striking articles about inspections of the dismantled weapons as applied to Cuba. There, where it speaks about multilateral inspection, it seems to me that it would be necessary to name

the countries. And what is your opinion, Comrades?

O. DORTICOS. I agree. Consequently we should strike article 13.

[Ed. note: Article 13 of the draft protocol read: "The Government of the Republic of Cuba agrees to allow onto the territory of Cuba confidential agents of the U.N. Security Council from the ranks of representatives of neutral states in order so that they can attest to the fulfillment of obligations vis-a-vis the dismantling and carrying away of the weapons mentioned in article 9 of the present Protocol." Draft Soviet-American-Cuban protocol (unofficial translation), 31 October 1962, Russian Foreign Ministry archives.]

C.R. RODRIGUEZ. And change article 10.

[Ed. note: Article 10 of the draft protocol read: "The Government of the USSR, taking into account the agreement of the Government of the Republic of Cuba, from its side agrees that confidential agents of the [UN] Security Council from the ranks of representatives of neutral states have attested to the fulfillment of obligations vis-a-vis the dismantling and carrying away of the weapons mentioned in Article 9 of the present Protocol." Draft Soviet-American-Cuban protocol (unofficial translation), 31 October 1962, Russian Foreign Ministry archives.]

A.I. MIKOYAN. In the 10th article something is said about Cuba?

E. GUEVARA. Yes. I would like to add that it seems to me that it makes sense to take into account the points which we made about the form. The document signed by the representatives of three countries cannot determine the list of countries in which observers from the UN or the Security Council should be present.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Maybe in this article references should be limited to the USA and Cuba, and stipulate that other countries can be included upon the agreement of their governments. So, for instance, from the direction of Guatemala they constantly will be threatening aggression. It would be advisable to point out that fact. It would be possible to ask the Security Council to set the list of countries. It could do this in article 15, there where U Thant's plan is mentioned. We could leave the article without changes or note that the countries are to be determined by the Security Council. It seems to me that it is important to preserve the reference to U Thant's plan.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. It would be possible to make many editorial changes here. So, for example, in the 3rd article it is said that "the Government of the USA will restrain those who intend to undertake aggression against Cuba

both from the territory of the USA and from the territory of the neighboring states of Cuba." This type of formulation seems to give the USA the right to determine the actions of other states.

A.I. MIKOYAN. What are you going to do about that? They are satellites. Maybe another editing will tie them even more. So far we have no other version, but it is possible to think about it. The 5th article contains clauses which have a similar nature. However, international law allows similar formulations.

[Ed. note: Article 5 of the draft protocol read: "The Government of the USA declares that the necessary measures will be taken to stop, both on the territory of the USA and on the territory of other countries of the Western hemisphere, any sort of underground activity against the Republic of Cuba, [including] shipments of weapons and explosive materials by air or sea, invasions by mercenaries, sending of spies and diversionists." Draft Soviet-American-Cuban protocol (unofficial translation), 31 October 1962, Russian Foreign Ministry archives.]

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. That is so, if the governments of those countries will not object. However, Guatemala will oppose this proposal. The situation will change, and the USA will refuse its obligations.

A.I. MIKOYAN. In Kennedy's message pretty much the same thought is expressed, but the use of a phrase like "I am sure, that other countries of the Western Hemisphere will not undertake aggressive actions..." Approximately in such a form. Comrade Carlos Rafael Rodriguez's observation is just. But it is necessary to think up something. The Americans may say that this is an issue for each of these countries. Let's take a look at the formulation in Kennedy's message.

ALEKSEEV. In this message it is said that "I am sure that other countries of the Western Hemisphere will be ready to proceed in a similar manner."

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. It would be possible to propose approximately this formulation: "The Security Council will undertake measures so as not to allow aggression against Cuba from the countries of the Caribbean, and also the use of weapons and the territory of these countries for the preparation of such aggression." It also would make sense to note that the "USA will take upon itself the obligation that no preparations will be conducted on its territory or with the assistance of its weapons..." It would be possible to work out this variant.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Yes. This variant really is interesting. It is important to note that the USA

acts not only from its own territory. This is a very important point for Cuba.

DORTICOS. It is necessary to work on the editing of this document. We are not prepared for this today. Here, it is necessary to think about the form, and also to work on the editing of this document, although we are essentially in agreement with this document and understand how important it is to achieve success. We can work a little bit together, significantly improving the formulation, but it makes sense to do it quicker.

ERNESTOGUEVARA. In essence we are in agreement with this document.

DORTICOS. Naturally, we have to overcome certain language difficulties, too. A more careful editing of the document evidently is necessary in both languages.

A.I. MIKOYAN. That is good. Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs is waiting for a communication about your attitude towards this document. Com. Kuznetsov also requested a clarification of your position on this issue. Now we could report about the principal agreement, excluding article 13, thoroughly editing article 5, and bearing changes in article 3 regarding the USA's position in respect to the countries of Central America. After our report about your fundamental agreement, but the MFA and also our representative at the UN will be able to begin work. Maybe we could present our variant tomorrow.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. The formulation of article 5 bothers me.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Yes. It encroaches on the sovereignty of the countries of Central America, but the governments of those countries are conducting a very bad policy.

DORTICOS. We will try to prepare our variant by tomorrow.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Working out this document, we are thinking about providing for the security of Cuba. It seems to me that it is not possible to limit the declaration about non-aggression to the United States only. The United States of America can push other countries towards aggression and provide help to them in aggression, while remaining on the sidelines itself. We have to oblige the United States to fulfill Kennedy's promise. Com. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is entirely right. It is not of course a matter of these governments, rather, the important thing is in the essence of this issue. Kennedy on this issue came to meet us. We demanded that not only the USA would give its word about non-aggression, but its allies too. This is a compro-

mise for them. We should use this compromise. It was not easy for the United States to make it.

ALEKSEEV. We should not miss this opportunity.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I am trying to evaluate the situation which flows from your positions. McCloy said that he gives his word that the camps will be liquidated, that there will be no preparations for aggression. This type of declaration has significance even in oral form. When the world knows, it will be uncomfortable for them not to fulfill their promises. I think, that it would be useful for you, comrades, to think about issues of mutual tactics. Let's say that the USA will not agree to inspection on its territory. However, as it seems to me, it would be important to organize observation on the territory of Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and certain other territories with the assistance of the UN representatives.

It seems to me that it would be important to arrange for inspection in the countries of Central America. Is Cuba interested in this? What are the positive and negative sides of this type of proposal? I am in no way an authority on issues of Central American policy, but it seems to me that it would be important to secure the presence of the UN there, in order to mitigate the significance in this region of the OAS and the Organization of Central American States. Comrades, have you thought about this issue? It will be easier for you to decide, than for us. Could the following situation come to pass? They will say to us, that inspections of the Central American countries are possible, but they cannot be realized on the territory of the United States of America. Would you agree to that or, in your opinion, is that type of a resolution not interesting to you, if it does not extend to the USA? This would be important for us to know in order to work out a joint tactic. It is clear that the USA will figure on the list. Or perhaps an agreement can be reached on inspection in Central American countries, while the USA will be limited only by the declaration. You could give your answer to my questions not today, but tomorrow.

DORTICOS. If inspections of the USA will be excluded, then in the same way inspections of Cuban territory will be excluded too.

A.I. MIKOYAN. You could thoroughly consider this issue, and then inform us of your decision.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. It would make sense to specify the terms of the multilateral inspections as they apply to Cuba. It should spell out the fulfillment of the obligation which the Soviet Union has accepted on itself, i.e. verification of the dismantling and evacuation of the Soviet missiles. As far as the rest of the countries

are concerned, this inspection would refer to the areas where camps for the training of counter-revolutionary mercenaries for aggression against Cuba are set up. The inspection could be extended to part of Florida, not touching, naturally, Cape Canaveral. It is also necessary to organize an inspection of camps in Puerto Rico, on the island of Vieques and in certain other territories, i.e., the inspection will touch not the entire territory of the mentioned countries, but rather those regions where these camps exist.

A.I. MIKOYAN. It is immediately evident that Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is a great specialist on these issues. In this way we could drive the aggressors into a corner. It is important to find an appropriate formulation. This variation represents a big step forward. Maybe tomorrow [Soviet officials] Bazykin and Alekseev will meet with some of you and confer on editorial issues. It will be important to have this document immediately following the elections in the USA. We will take the initiative, and we will not allow the Americans to capture it. Perhaps the Security Council can be convened on the 7th or 8th of November.

ALEKSEEV. According to my information this will be done on the 6th.

DORTICOS objects.

GUEVARA objects.

A.I. MIKOYAN. U Thant told me that on 6 November the Security Council cannot be convened: we will argue. There are protocol issues here, and declarations, and procedures. We mustn't underestimate the importance of the struggle in the UN and the opinions of the member states.

DORTICOS. We believe that it is possible to act in the following way. Let us undertake a thorough revision of the document, and we will try to do it quicker. Right after we have prepared it, Comrades Bazykin and Alekseev can meet with our representatives in order to consider editorial issues.

There is information from Comrade [Carlos M.] Lechuga [Hevia], our new representative at the UN, regarding the fact that U Thant is inclined to put off the convening of the Security Council. It is possible that his session won't even be this week. U Thant is interested in holding bilateral meetings before convening the Security Council. Besides this, now we are entering a pretty complicated time: in the recent hours the USA has begun to create even more tension, not only in relation to the IL-28 bombers, but has also announced unlimited airborne surveillance.

This is dangerous. We will consider what to do under conditions of a renewal of provocations

from the air.

A.I. MIKOYAN. You, Comrade Dorticos, possess trustworthy information. We told U Thant that it would be good if the Security Council were convened after the elections. I already said that when we withdraw the strategic missiles and present evidence of that fact, we will be able to begin to speak about something else.

Maybe tomorrow in the first half of the day the comrades will work on editing the document, and after lunch we will organize an exchange of opinions.

I would also like to propose that we not publish a report about every meeting. It seems to me that there is no point in doing this today, and in general it would make sense for us to come to an agreement about this.

DORTICOS agrees with Comrade Mikoyan's proposal.

A.I. MIKOYAN. When we complete the evacuation of the missiles, many issues will be seen in a different light. While we still have not withdrawn them, we must maintain a different line. For that, 5-6 days are necessary. It is necessary to hold the line; otherwise they will accuse us of treachery. After we complete the evacuation, we will be able to adamantly oppose overflights, the quarantine, verification by the Red Cross, violations of airspace. At that moment the correlation of forces will change.

It is necessary to get the UN on our side. We must achieve more than was promised in Kennedy's letter. We mustn't underestimate the value of diplomatic means of struggle. They are very important in periods when there is no war. It is important to know how to use the diplomatic arts, displaying at the same time both firmness and flexibility.

E. GUEVARA. I would like to tell you, Comrade Mikoyan, that, sincerely speaking, as a consequence of the most recent events an extremely complicated situation has been created in Latin America. Many communists who represent other Latin American parties, and also revolutionary divisions like the Front for People's Action in Chile, are wavering. They are dismayed [*obeskurazheni*] by the actions of the Soviet Union. A number of divisions have broken up. New groups are springing up, fractions are springing up. The thing is, we are deeply convinced of the possibility of seizing power in a number of Latin American countries, and practice shows that it is possible not only to seize it, but also to hold power in a range of countries, taking into account practical experience. Unfortunately, many Latin American groups believe that in the political acts of the Soviet Union during the recent events there are contained two serious errors. First, the exchange [the proposal to swap Soviet missiles in

Cuba for U.S. missiles in Turkey—ed.], and second, the open concession. It seems to me that this bears objective witness to the fact that we can now expect the decline of the revolutionary movement in Latin America, which in the recent period had been greatly strengthened. I have expressed my personal opinion, but I have spoken entirely sincerely.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Of course, it is necessary to speak sincerely. It is better to go to sleep than to hear insincere speeches.

E. GUEVARA. I also think so. Cuba is a country in which the interests of both camps meet head on. Cuba is a peace-loving country. However, during the recent events the USA managed to present itself in the eyes of public opinion as a peace-loving country which was exposing aggression from the USSR, demonstrating courage and achieving the liquidation of the Soviet base in Cuba. The Americans managed to portray the existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba as a manifestation of aggressive intentions from the Soviet Union. The USA, by achieving the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba, in a way received the right to forbid other countries from making bases available. Not only many revolutionaries think this way, but also representatives of the Front of People's Action in Chile and the representatives of several democratic movements.

In this, in my opinion, lies the crux of the recent events. Even in the context of all our respect for the Soviet Union, we believe that the decisions made by the Soviet Union were a mistake. I am saying this not for discussion's sake, but so that you, Comrade Mikoyan, would be conversant with this point of view.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. Even before your arrival, Comrade Mikoyan, immediately after the famous decision of the Soviet government was made, comrades from the editorial board of the newspaper "Popular" phoned me and requested an interview. They wanted urgently to receive our declaration regarding the situation which had developed, since the representatives of the "third force" were actively opposing Soviet policy. You know that group, it is deputy Trias. I gave an interview, not very long, since though I had been informed about the basic points in the speech of Fidel Castro which should have taken place on November 1, I could not use them, and in conclusion I observed that the development of events in the coming days would show the significance of the decisions that had been made.

A.I. MIKOYAN. The meetings and conversations with Comrade Fidel Castro had for me very great significance. They helped me to understand more deeply the role of the psychological factor for the peoples of these countries.

E. GUEVARA. I think that the Soviet policy had two weak sides. You didn't understand the significance of the psychological factor for Cuban conditions. This thought was expressed in an original way by Fidel Castro: "The USA wanted to destroy us physically, but the Soviet Union with Khrushchev's letter destroyed us legally [*iuridicheskii*]."

A.I. MIKOYAN. But we thought that you would be satisfied by our act. We did everything so that Cuba would not be destroyed. We see your readiness to die beautifully, but we believe that it isn't work dying beautifully.

E. GUEVARA. To a certain extent you are right. You offended our feelings by not consulting us. But the main danger is in the second weak side of the Soviet policy. The thing is, you as if recognized the right of the USA to violate international law. This is great damage done to your policy. This fact really worries us. It may cause difficulties for maintaining the unity of the socialist countries. It seems to us that there already are cracks in the unity of the socialist camp.

A.I. MIKOYAN. That issue worries us too. We are doing a lot to strengthen our unity, and with you, comrades, we will always be with you despite all the difficulties.

E. GUEVARA. To the last day?

A.I. MIKOYAN. Yes, let our enemies die. We must live and live. Live like communists. We are convinced of our victory. A maneuver is not the same as a defeat. Compare the situation of a year ago, and today. A year ago the presence of Soviet soldiers in Cuba would have provoked an explosion of indignation. Now, it is as if the right of Russians to be on this continent also is recognized. That is good. McCloy even told me jokingly during a conversation that the presence of Russian officers [in Cuba—ed.] calms him down. The Cubans could open fire without thinking, he observed. But Russians will think. Of course, there could be objections to this remark, but the psychological aspect is taken into consideration.

Sometimes, in order to take two steps forward, it is necessary to take a step back. I will not in any way teach you, though I am older. You may say: it is time to consign it to the archive, request that we resign.

Recently, I read Lenin. I want to tell you about this not for some sort of an analogy, but as an example of Leninist logic. When the Brest peace treaty was signed, Bukharin was working in the International Committee of the Party. Although he was repressed, I consider him a good person. He tried, it happens, mistakenly, emotions had great significance for him. We were friends (not in 1918, at that time I was working in

the Caucasus, but much later). And so the International Committee accepted a resolution in which it was stated that the concession in Brest was shameful. The point of Soviet power is lost. The comrades accepted the resolution as if rejecting Soviet power itself. Lenin wrote about this resolution: monstrous. How is it possible for such a thought even to occur to a communist? But you know, at that time we practically had no armed forces, but those comrades wanted to die heroically, rejecting Soviet power.

E. GUEVARA. Yes. I see that there is no analogy here, but great similarities.

A.I. MIKOYAN. There really is no analogy in this example. Imagine, Russia at that time was alone. We had no forces. There was some sympathy from the working class of other countries, but sympathy alone doesn't help much. Cuba is powerful. You have no war. You have the support of the socialist camp. It is true, your geographic situation is disadvantageous, communications are far extended. This is a weak position. The Americans can disrupt communications and not allow the delivery of fuel to Cuba. We could have brought 200 million people into the streets as a demonstration of protest. But this would not have garnered any fuel for you.

How can the blockade be disrupted? How can it be broken? We have at our disposal global rockets. Using them would lead to nuclear war. What do you say to this? Shall we die heroically? That is romance. Why should revolutionaries die[?]? It is necessary to maneuver, develop the economy, culture, serve as an example of other peoples of the countries of Latin America and lead them to revolution. Lenin, in a complex situation even agreed to the conduct of the conference in the Prince Isles. Study Lenin. To die heroically—that's not enough. To live in shame is not permitted, but nor is it permitted to give to the enemy your own destruction. It is necessary to seek a way out in the art of diplomacy.

A barber comes to me in the residence with a pistol, and I ask him: "You want to shave me with a pistol? No, with a razor." Or, a correspondent from the newspaper "Oy" interviewed me, what a pleasant young man, also with a pistol. He has to take notes, but he lost his pencil. What can he write with a pistol? Do you understand me? If Kennedy maneuvers, dissimulates, conducts a flexible policy, why don't the Cuban comrades use that weapon[?]? You won't manage to knock off the reaction with a pistol, the diplomatic art is necessary too.

I was very satisfied by the conversation with comrade Fidel Castro, but today I didn't even know what to say regarding his reaction. But I repeat that it was amazing. Maybe I spoke foolishly, but before that I thought for a long time. For me it has been morally difficult during these days. And today it was difficult for me to

understand his reaction. Perhaps I let some clumsiness show, spoke in some kind of tone? No, I, it seems, gave no grounds. I said that it is necessary to help U Thant. It is necessary to keep U Thant on our side. Comrade Fidel asked an appropriate question, why not conduct the verification on the open sea. But U Thant won't gain anything with the assistance of this type of verification. Today I became a victim of Fidel's good speech, evidently because I extemporaneously put forth my idea. An old man, I have the shortcomings of the young.

E. GUEVARA. One day before that we said that there would be no inspections. Comrade Mikoyan said that he had told McCloy that airborne inspections are inadmissible.

A.I. MIKOYAN. My proposal did not concern even the shore. The subject was verification of our ships. Ships are sovereign territory. The waters are yours, therefore we were trying to elucidate your point of view. We didn't touch the land. We were talking about the waters. The land had nothing to do with it. Evidently I was naive. I thought that this variant was possible. Our ambassador, a young person, told me secretly: "I think that the Cubans will accept this proposal." (To Alekseev): Don't you speak for them. You are not a Cuban.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. I have been reading Lenin's works for a long time. In the present situation we need evaluations which correctly reflect the situation. It is not a matter of feelings. These are the objective conditions in Latin America.

In the first day of our conversations Comrade Mikoyan spoke about two types of struggle. I think that in certain conditions the last word belongs to the political struggle. In Latin America after these events a feeling of demoralization arose among the people. The nationalistic petit bourgeoisie lost their faith in the possibility of confronting imperialism. Diplomacy may change the situation. Many people believe that if Kennedy affirms his promises only orally, that will be equivalent to a defeat. But if pressure will be applied by the Soviet Union, if Cuba will act decisively, if we use U Thant and the neutral states to the necessary extent, if we insist on the acceptance of the demand re: verification of the enemy's territory, if we achieve acceptance of Fidel's five points, we will gain a significant victory.

An oral declaration of non-aggression definitely will create a feeling of a defeat.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I agree with Carlos Rafael Rodriguez. Comrade Guevara evaluated the past events in a pessimistic tone. I respect his opinion, but I do not agree with him. I will try during the next meeting to convince him, though I doubt my

ability to do that. Comrade Carlos Rafael Rodriguez pointed out the directions of the future struggle. I like this way of framing the issue. Of course, it is foolish simply to believe Kennedy, it is necessary to bind him with obligations.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. And with strategic missiles?

A.I. MIKOYAN. We cannot defend you with these missiles. I received the possibility to visit you, while others could not do that. We had to request the agreement of Canada, the USA to the overflight, and to overcome other difficulties. They told us, for example, that we could not fly to Canada without lead [escort?—ed.] planes. We had to receive visas. What could we do? That is their right. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs phoned the State Department and asked: Will you give a visa to Mikoyan or not? Canada delayed giving an answer, the Canadian minister was absent, he was in New York. Other officials could not resolve that issue. Approval was granted at 1:30 a.m., and at 3 a.m. we took off. But somehow we started talking about me. If Cuba was located in Greece's place, we would have shown them.

I am satisfied by my meetings with you. The business side is important. Basically, we have come to an agreement on the protocol. Besides that, I must say that I thought that I understood the Cubans, and then I listened to Comrade Ché and understood that no, I still don't know them.

ALEKSEEV: But Ché is an Argentinean.

A.I. MIKOYAN, to Ché: Let's meet and talk a little. I would like to exchange some thoughts with you. It is not a matter of who will be victorious over whom. We must try to help each other. I understood a lot. I understood how important the psychological factor is in Latin America. I am at your disposal. Every meeting is very useful for me. However you want it: one on one, two on each side, and so on. When I return to Moscow, I should have the right to say that I understood the Cubans, but I am afraid that when I return I will say that I don't know them, and in fact I will not know them.

Our stake in Cuba is huge in both a material and moral [sense], and also in a military regard. Think about it, are we really helping you out of [our] overabundance? Do we have something extra? We don't have enough for ourselves. No, we want to preserve the base of socialism in Latin America. You were born as heroes, before a revolutionary situation ripened in Latin America, but the camp of socialism still has not grown into its full capability to come to your assistance. We give you ships, weapons, people, fruits and vegetables. China is big, but for the time being it is

agenda of that meeting deals with the 1986 crash in South African territory of the aircraft, piloted by Soviet military personnel, carrying the Mozambican President Samora Machel. While sitting as Chairman, General Secretary Gorbachev states: "The last report of our pilot was: 'We have been shot down.'"

The event in question is certainly not a major one in Cold War political history, but the Gorbachev quotation raises the problem of the accuracy of Soviet documents, and in this case, at the very highest level: Was information that reached the most senior Soviet leadership "doctored" in some cases in advance? If so, at what level? By intelligence or administrative agencies? If it was not, was the Politburo nevertheless purposefully misinformed on certain occasions?

Following the aircraft crash which resulted in their President's death, the Mozambican government established a Board of Inquiry, which carried out an investigation of the crash. The possibility that the aircraft was shot down was eliminated in the very early days of their investigation. There was no mention of the plane being "shot down" on the tape of the aircraft's cockpit voice recorder. Instead, there was substantial evidence that the crash was accidental. The basic cause of the accident was a laxity in routine operational precautions at several points. In particular, the aircraft had taken off for a return flight to the Mozambican capital with the minimum fuel needed to reach its destination. It therefore had no leeway for any unexpected contingency. The aircraft was off-course at nighttime when fuel ran out, which the flight crew perceived, and it crashed when the fuel was exhausted.

It was impossible to resolve the question of whether a South African decoy beacon had contributed to the plane being off course, since the South African government did not make the records of its military, intelligence or air traffic control agencies available to Mozambique. The South African government instituted a National Board of Inquiry of its own, and closed it with a declaration that the cause of the crash was accidental. However, given the date—1986—substantial skepticism can be permitted as to whether South Africa would have disclosed the operation of a beacon if one had been in operation, and had contributed to the death of a president of a neighboring country.

There is of course no way to reconcile

the assessment of the Mozambican Board of Inquiry with Gorbachev's statement to the Soviet Politburo that the aircraft was "...shot down." The latter now appears in an official Soviet *document* and becomes recorded for posterity in that form. If one accepts the conclusion of the Mozambican panel, then Gorbachev's statement in the text of an official Soviet document raises all the problems indicated above, either regarding the nature and accuracy of information that reached the Politburo's staff or its presentation to the Politburo's members, or some combination of both.

Sincerely yours,

Milton Leitenberg

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January 9, 1995

To the Editor:

In the Fall 1994 issue of the *Bulletin* there is an exchange of letters between Adam Ulam and Kathryn Weathersby. Ulam's views, as an experienced Cold War Warrior, evince no surprise but Ms. Weathersby's comment, "This distinction does not negate Soviet responsibility for the bloodshed that followed," certainly does. Just whose army was it that napalm bombed the Koreans, or used delayed fused bombs and further, resorted to bombing the dams in order to starve the people? Was Stalin to be held responsible for the atomic bomb threats and plans directed against the Korean people by Truman, MacArthur, Ridgeway, and last but not least by Eisenhower?

Now that the Cold War is over (although one would never know it looking at the current military budget and the plans to increase it) it is time we get back to History, not as propaganda, not as political expediency.

Sincerely yours,

Ephraim Schulman

MIKOYAN-CUBAN TALKS

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still a poor country. There will come a time when we will show our enemies. But we do not want to die beautifully. Socialism must live. Excuse the rhetoric. If you are not against it, let us continue our conversation tomorrow.

DORTICOS. We can meet, but we would like to know the opinion of the Soviet government and Comrade Mikoyan about what we will do about the agreement on military assistance.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Let's consider that. Think about a program of future work. I am free. I am prepared to visit you.

DORTICOS. Thank you. Tomorrow we will set the conditions with the ambassador.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I agree.

Ambassador A. Alekseev attended the conversation.

Recorded by: [signature] V. Tikhmenev

Com. Mikoyan A.I. has not looked over the transcript of the conversation.

[Source: Russian Foreign Ministry archives, copy provided by National Security Archive, Washington, D.C.; translation by Mark H. Doctoroff.]

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[Ed. note: For an English translation of the meeting between Mikoyan and Castro on 12 November 1962, in which the Soviet envoy conveyed Moscow's decision to acquiesce to Kennedy's demand to withdraw the Soviet IL-28 bombers from Cuba (provoking an angry response from Castro), see the Soviet minutes of the meeting (and Mikoyan's ciphered telegram reporting on it to the CC CPSU) in appendices to Gen. Anatoli I. Gribkov and Gen. William Y. Smith, OPERATION ANADYR: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis (Chicago: edition q, inc., 1994), 189-99.

Shortly before this issue of the CWIHP Bulletin went to press, the Cuban government declassified several of its memoranda of the Mikoyan-Cuban negotiations. A report on these materials, and the divergences between them and the Soviet records, will appear in a future issue.]