

November 7, 1962

**From the Journal of V.V. Kuznetsov: Record of
conversation with the Cuban Representative to the
UN, C. Lechuga**

Citation:

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Summary:

Kuznetsov and Lechuga discuss a number of issues, the misunderstanding on the part of the Cubans regarding the Khrushchev-Kennedy letters, American non-aggression toward Cuba and other concerns of the Cubans.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

On 7 November 1962 a meeting took place with the permanent Cuban representative to the UN, Lechuga. V. V. Kuznetsov informed him that in recent days we had been discussing with the Americans a series of problems deriving from the exchange of letters between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, N.S. Khrushchev, and President Kennedy, including the issue of assurances and guarantees that Cuba would not be attacked by the USA or by the other countries neighboring Cuba. At the present stage of the discussion, we have not yet gone so far as to work out any documents or the details of the agreement. The Americans are now trying to find pretexts for avoiding definite and concrete statements. All in all, they have not been displaying any spirit of cooperation at the negotiating table.

In the American press there are frequent statements about how the USA has apparently won a triumph in the Cuban crisis. But it is clear to anyone who is able soberly to assess the events that, thanks to the firm and peaceful policies of the Soviet Union and the peace-loving actions it has taken in the crisis period, what has really triumphed is the cause of peace, what has triumphed is reason. Now that the first stage is over and the missiles are being shipped out of Cuba, we consider it necessary to take the following steps in the negotiations with the Americans, steps that should show whether or not the Americans really want to put an end to the crisis and to prevent a repetition of this dangerous military situation. We intend to put before the Americans the issue of how they will fulfill their obligations regarding the guarantee against an attack on Cuba. Lechuga said that Cuba supports the Soviet Union's peace-loving policies, and that the misunderstanding which had arisen in Cuba after the first steps taken by the Soviet Union had now been completely eradicated. We knew, Lechuga said, that the Soviet government was defending the interests of peace, we were in full agreement with the goals it was pursuing, but we were not in agreement on the formulations that had been used to do so. It must be borne in mind that the Cubans are a young nation, passionate in character. When the crisis began, the Cubans were full of determination to fight, and for this reason when the events took a different turn, the feeling arose in them that they had experienced a failure. At the same time that this crisis represented a global problem, for Cuba it was also her own problem, one which roused the whole nation, and from that communal feeling came the famous five points appearing in Fidel Castro's statement. Now, however, the Soviet government can be sure that the uncertainty which arose in the first moments of the crisis has been dispelled, and that the Cuban nation is delighted by the firmness and peace-loving actions of the Soviet Union. Lechuga also said that he had had a meeting with the Red Cross representatives, who had raised the issue of their inspection on the open sea of the vessels entering and sailing from Cuba. They made no mention of the establishing of an inspection procedure in Cuban territory. Lechuga said that he had answered the Red Cross representatives, in provisional fashion, that it did not seem that the Cuban government would offer any objections to that, since the issue at hand did not concern Cuban territory, but rather the open sea, and since this whole affair more directly concerns the USSR and the USA. The Red Cross representatives said that they intended to carry out their inspection operations under the aegis of the UN, and to select the inspection personnel from the citizenry of neutral countries rather than from those of the interested countries. Lechuga stated that in the talks with the Deputy Secretary General of the UN Loutfi, the latter had told him that the period of five days, proposed by the Soviet Union as the maximum period in which the inspection of vessels could be conducted, was insufficient, since within this period the Red Cross representatives would not even be able to prepare their ships or send them into the inspection zone. Loutfi also mentioned that the USA had raised the question of the IL-28 bombers located in Cuba, and that he was interested in whether these bombers were manned by Soviet or Cuban pilots. V.V. Kuznetsov said that our position with regard to the Red Cross inspections was based on the correspondence between N.S. Khrushchev and Kennedy. We are generally opposed to the carrying out of any inspections at all. The Soviet Union agreed to the possibility of using Red Cross observers for the duration of a very short time only to give assurances that the missiles had been removed from Cuba. Since the USA maintains that the reason for the current crisis is the existence of missiles in Cuba, then it follows that with the removal of these missiles, the reasons adduced by the USA for their actions against Cuba are also removed. In the negotiations with the UN Secretary General, we said that it was clear that we consider all the actions taken by the USA and leading to the current crisis to be unlawful. It is from precisely that same point of view that we are now

conducting negotiations. With the resolution of this problem, there should not be any infringement at all on the sovereignty of Cuba or its legal rights. In response to the question as to whether vessels could now proceed unhindered to Cuba, Lechuga answered in the affirmative. With regard to the "IL-28" bombers, V.V. Kuznetsov told Lechuga that the Americans had asked this question during the negotiations with us, but that we had answered that it goes beyond the negotiation parameters defined in N.S. Khrushchev's and Kennedy's letters. The Americans also raised the issue of the continuation of reconnaissance flights over Cuba, to which we responded that we considered such flights to be a blatant violation of the sovereignty of Cuba, the norms of international law, and the principles of the UN Charter. The continuation of such flights would lead to a prolongation of tensions, and any measures taken by the Cuban government in connection with this will be justified, and all responsibility for any consequences will lie on the shoulders of the United States. At the upcoming conference we intend to exert pressure on them with regard to the guarantees of non-aggression against Cuba. And as far as the five points put forth in Fidel Castro's statement are concerned, we support them, including the point about Guantanamo, and we are taking this into account in the negotiations with the Americans. In conclusion V.V. Kuznetsov said that an analysis of the events and of the steps that we took in the crisis period shows that definite positive results have been attained, that we have definite assurances of non-aggression against Cuba, and that the issue now is how the USA will fulfill its obligations. It is impossible to forget that the whole world is currently watching how the events connected with the Cuban crisis are unfolding. [Source: AVP RF; copy obtained by NHK , provided to CWIHP, and on file at National Security Archive, Washington, D.C.; translation by John Henriksen, Harvard University.]