

November 14, 1962

**Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the USA A.F.
Dobrynin to USSR Foreign Ministry**

Citation:

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Summary:

Dobrynin and Robert Kennedy meet again after Robert Kennedy had discussed the results of their previous meeting with his brother. Robert Kennedy expresses his opinions and how he believes the President will respond to Soviet negotiations.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Having familiarized himself with our response, Robert Kennedy said that he would pass it on to the President today. Then, saying that he would like to express a little of his own views provisionally, Robert Kennedy stated the following. The President--he, Robert Kennedy, expects--will be disappointed by the answer when he receives it. The President's proposal was very simple: the USA would immediately and officially lift the blockade in exchange for assurances--public or not--that before some definite date the IL-28 planes would be removed. The President believes that this proposal of his serves the interests of both countries, and opens the way towards a resolution of the remaining aspects of the Cuban problem, creating a significantly less tense situation than the one that would arise if his proposal was approved by the Soviets. The President intends to fulfill his obligations, which were stipulated by the correspondence between the heads of the two governments. But for this there must be a certain time in which all the details of the future agreement can be worked out. The President's proposal referred to above could be carried out immediately, without any delay. The insistence of the USA government in this matter of the IL-28 planes has been provoked by the growing pressure that has been brought to bear on the President by representatives of Congress, the press, and so on. It is important that this aspect be properly understood in Moscow, since the President himself has great difficulties in dealing with this issue (Robert Kennedy twice emphasized the "difficulties for the President"). I carried on the discussion with Robert Kennedy of these difficulties using the arguments advanced by N.S. Khrushchev's response. It was especially emphasized that we have removed from Cuba the missiles and warheads, in other words that we have fulfilled the obligations we assumed, while the USA is not fulfilling its own obligations; for this reason, in order to conduct assurance inspections after the missiles and warheads have been removed, the quarantine should have already been lifted by now, the flights by American planes over the territory of Cuba should have already ceased, and the mutual obligations assumed by the parties should have been formalized in appropriate documents under the auspices of the UN. Robert Kennedy stated that the USA government would not cease its flights over Cuba in circumstances in which he had no other guarantees that the government of Cuba would carry out its end of the agreement. Mr. Mikoyan's long stay in Cuba shows--or at least this conviction has been created in us--that Premier Castro does not want to approve the agreement reached between the President and the head of the Soviet government on such guarantees. We understand the circumstances that have been created, but this does not relieve the difficulties of our position, said Robert Kennedy. The issue of UN guarantees, in the form of UN posts or something like them, would require a significant amount of time before concrete approval of the agreement could be reached. Let us take for example the issue of UN posts in the area of the Caribbean basin. Here Robert Kennedy asked, would the Soviet Union itself really agree to some foreign posts on its own territory? As far as we know, in every such case it has categorically rejected, and still rejects, the idea of observational posts within its borders. Robert Kennedy was immediately told that evidently he had not been sufficiently familiarized with N.S. Khrushchev's response, which spoke, as did his preceding message to the President, of how it seems that our countries must in the first place come back in their disarmament negotiations to the Soviet proposals that stipulated posts in airports, in the major ports, at railroad hubs, and on motorways in order to guarantee for all countries of the world that no country can assemble troops and prepare for attack on or invasion of another country. Robert Kennedy corrected himself, confirming that such a proposal was indeed to be found in N.S. Khrushchev's responses. By the way, the remark I made has no direct connection to the subject presently under discussion, the subject from which I digressed, he continued. As far as I am aware, there are no unsurmountable obstacles on this point, although for us it seems a highly complicated issue to organize UN posts in the parts of the USA bordering the Caribbean Sea, if that agreement with Cuba is indeed reached. However, just yesterday at a White House meeting I heard that far from all the countries of this area would agree to participate in such an agreement. Thus if you insist on all the countries of the Caribbean area, the whole affair might be delayed even longer. I am saying all this, Robert Kennedy concluded, not in order to discuss the details of this issues--I do not know them myself, since they are the responsibility of Stevenson and Kuznetsov--but rather to show that time is needed for all this, and that it would scarcely be expedient or reasonable to wait for it before lifting the quarantine and removing the IL-28 planes. The President has put forth a proposal that he believes serves the interests of both parties, but that

proposal is being rejected now by the Soviets, which can lead only to an extension, or perhaps even a complication, of the present situation which clearly does not satisfy us or, we believe, you. Both parties are equally uninterested in that. We hope nonetheless that Chairman N.S. Khrushchev will be able to approve the proposal put forth by the President, who himself had great confidence in it when he sent it to Khrushchev. I told Robert Kennedy that the position of the Soviet government has been clearly laid out in today's response by N.S. Khrushchev. The Soviet Union has fulfilled its obligations. Now it is simply the USA government's turn to do the same, so that the situation of tension that has been created in the Caribbean Sea can be eased. For this it is necessary: to lift the quarantine without delay, to cease all flights by USA planes over Cuba, and to fix the mutual obligations deriving from the correspondence between the heads of both governments on 27 and 28 October. If corresponding instructions were given by the President to McCloy and Stevenson on the issue of UN posts in the Caribbean Sea area and the parts of the USA that border it-- and the Soviet representatives already have such instructions--and if they could reach an agreement, then of course the issue of the time-frame for the removal of the IL-28 planes would not be any complex problem. Since Robert Kennedy, who often refers to the President's opinion, has been stubbornly continuing to assert the necessity of first resolving the issue of the IL-28 planes' removal, connecting the lifting of the quarantine with that removal, he was directly asked, after mutually reiterating our arguments to each other, whether this meant that the President had already authorized him to give an answer, and that such an answer should be communicated to Moscow? Robert Kennedy immediately answered that the views he had been expressing, although based on the opinions of the President, with whom he had just that evening discussed all these issues, are nonetheless exclusively his own, Robert Kennedy's, personal thoughts, and that there would be an answer to N.S. Khrushchev's address today from the President himself. Robert Kennedy promised to provide information on that answer immediately. Towards the end, the conversation started to have a formalized and official air connected with the President's invitation, passed on to me via Robert Kennedy, to visit the White House on the following day along with the Bolshoi Theater troupe. 14.XI.62 A. DOBRYNIN[Source: AVP RF; copy obtained by NHK, provided to CWIHP, and on file at National Security Archive; translation by John Henriksen.]