

November 4, 1962
**Memorandum of Conversation between Castro and
Mikoyan**

Citation:

"Memorandum of Conversation between Castro and Mikoyan", November 4, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Russian Foreign Ministry archives, obtained and translated by NHK television, copy provided by Philip Brenner; translation by Aleksandr Zaemsky slightly revised <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110961>

Summary:

Mikoyan discusses the Soviet decision to exclude the Cubans from negotiations with the US, regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis, with Cuban leadership.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

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 opinion. 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-Leninist 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 are 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 understand 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 importance, 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 Latin-American 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 CC CPSU 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, without 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 question 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 Latin-American 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 revisionists 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 countries, 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.

F. 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 verification: 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 Latin American 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 questions 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]