

November 30, 1962
**A.I. Mikoyan, Memorandum of Conversation with
Robert Kennedy**

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Summary:

A meeting in which Mikoyan recounts a dinner in which American officials and Soviet officials discuss the future of Soviet-American relations.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

[...] On the evening of 30 November, A.I. Mikoyan was present at a dinner in honor of the American Secretary of the Interior [Stewart] Udall. The guests included R. Kennedy, Deputy Secretary of State [George] Ball, the chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisors [Walter] Heller, the chairman of the Board of Directors of the "New York Times" [Orville] Dryfoos, and the Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin.

All the American guests were with their wives, except for Robert Kennedy who came with his eldest daughter, age 13. He has seven children in all. He said that his wife, together with the other six [children], who had the flu, had gone to Florida to bring them up to [good] condition.

Before dinner, Robert Kennedy, after conversations of a protocol-like nature in the presence of all, asked A.I. Mikoyan to step into another room, where one on one (Dobrynin) [they] first touched on the matter of one Zaslavskii (a Soviet citizen), who married an American tourist, but our court annulled the marriage. He [Kennedy] said that he is embarrassed to present this matter officially, since it has no bearing on the relations between our governments. But for the Minister of Justice [Attorney General] the resolution of this question is important. The question is small, but delicate, and its resolution would be greeted with satisfaction.

Then he touched on the major questions for which they had left the company - the significance of yesterday's conversations with President Kennedy and the need for contacts between Khrushchev and Kennedy and mutual actions.

The President, said R. Kennedy, considers yesterday's conversation extremely useful, promoting further mutual comprehension between our governments and their heads. In this respect, this meeting can be characterized as definite progress. Such is the opinion of the president himself.

What is most important now, continued R. Kennedy. The most important, even more important than the fates of my children and your grandchildren, although they, of course, are the nearest and dearest to us, is the question of mutual understanding between Chairman Khrushchev and President Kennedy. Indeed, it now decides the fate of the world. One must admit that in the course of the recent crisis, their personal relations and mutual trust underwent serious trials, as a result of which, frankly speaking, damage was sustained. Therefore, it is very important to do everything to restore fully the trust on which so much depends. We ourselves understand the need for this, for we must look ahead. We, concluded R. Kennedy, sincerely hope that the development of our relations can follow a happier course than in the past.

A.I. Mikoyan replied to R. Kennedy that he fully agrees with the idea of the importance for preserving peace and for the basic improvement of relations between our countries of good personal relations between N.S. Khrushchev and president Kennedy, their mutual understanding and trust of one another. As one of N.S. Khrushchev's comrades-in-arms [soratnik], said A.I. Mikoyan, I can assure you that exactly these thoughts define his approach to his relations with the USA president. N.S. Khrushchev values the personal quality of these relations. The Soviet government renders its due to the self-possession [otdaet dolzhnoe vyderzhke] exhibited by the president in the most dangerous moment, when the world stood at the edge of thermonuclear war, but by mutual concessions and compromises, succeeded in averting this war.

Moscow, continued A.I. Mikoyan, noticed the positive role you, the president's brother, played during the confidential negotiations between the president and the head of the Soviet state. Of course, we understand, that you did this, as did we, in the interests of one's own country, one's own people. It was important, however, that you understood correctly, in the critical moment, what those interests were. Let us now

complete the outlined resolution to the Cuban question, without complicating it with trivial formal cavils [melochnaia pridirka], or even worse, some deviation from the agreement on the final settlement of this question. Indeed, if one speaks the truth, there's not much left to do; it is only necessary to put in writing or to finalize, without excessive procrastination that which the American side obligated itself to do during the exchange of messages between N.S. Khrushchev and the president.

R. Kennedy noted that he agreed that little of essence remained to be done - indeed, "it's 90 percent done," although there are still difficulties that must be overcome. But he, R. Kennedy, did not intend to analyze these difficulties. They were the subject of detailed discussion in New York. He only wanted to emphasize briefly that with which he began: the importance of further developing mutual understanding between the president and N.S. Khrushchev. This will determine to a large extent the success and solution of other questions that still await settlement.

A.I. Mikoyan agreed with this. Returning to his conversation with the president, A.I. Mikoyan said, that although in its course there were a few sharp [ostryi] moments, on the whole he agrees with R. Kennedy's evaluation of the conversation with the president.

To all appearances, this was reflected in the ensuing conversation with Rusk, which took place in a business-like and friendly atmosphere, clearly, not without the influence of the president. R. Kennedy smiled, but he didn't say anything.

In concluding the conversation, R. Kennedy asked [Mikoyan] to give greetings to N.S. Khrushchev. In his turn A.I. Mikoyan sent greetings to the president.

Robert Kennedy showed interest in visiting the Soviet Union and expressed this desire.

A.I. Mikoyan said that this was a good idea and completely realizable. If the decrease in tension between [our] countries continues further and the political atmosphere warms up, then this trip would not only be interesting but useful for him.

After our return to the other room, Udall made the first toast to the leaders of the two great nations - N.S. Khrushchev and J. Kennedy - "people of strength and peace." One theme of the toasts and remarks of the American representatives during the meal was to express satisfaction over the fact that our two countries have succeeded in avoiding a clash in the Cuban crisis and [to support] the need to search for ways of avoiding the repetition of similar crises in the future. Note the following pronouncements.

Udall emphasized the pleasant impressions from his trip to the Soviet Union and from his meeting with N.S. Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders. He said that his feelings of sympathy for the Soviet people grew stronger, and he said so despite criticism of these statements in the USA, still in September. He asked [me] to transmit his invitation to visit the United States to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Comrade Novikov, and to the Energy and Electrification Minister, Comrade Neporozhnyi, noting in jest that he was ready to show "some secrets," as was done during his visit to the Soviet side.

A.I. Mikoyan pronounced a toast to the host, Secretary Udall, his wife and children, who were presented to A.I. Mikoyan by their parents. Udall has 6 children.

A.I. Mikoyan joked that although Khrushchev's acquaintance with Udall was brief, and Mikoyan's acquaintance with Udall at the time even briefer, Udall immediately won

over Khrushchev and then Mikoyan. Khrushchev said to Mikoyan: What a simpatico [simpaticnyi] and good man is Mr. Udall!

When I met him at dinner, said Mikoyan, he made such an impression on me. There are some people, whom you know for years, but actually don't know, and suddenly after decades you see the real face of the man. And there are also those, who after several hours, you can tell what kind of man they are. Udall belongs to this category. When he returned to his homeland after visiting the Soviet Union he landed in an atmosphere of anti-Soviet hysteria. The agents of monopolies, the press and radio tried to get anti-Soviet statements out of him, counter to those he had made in the Soviet Union. Udall's conscientiousness [dobros-ovestnost'] was confirmed and he did not give in to this pressure and said what he thought, that is, he repeated in the USA what he had said in the Soviet Union.

A.I. Mikoyan transmitted greetings from N.S. Khrushchev and offered a toast to [Khrushchev's] health.

Ball underlined that the necessary condition for greater trust between the USSR and USA was our renunciation of "the practices [of] a closed society," stating, in particular, that this should be demonstrated concretely by the broadening of exchanges and in our agreement to the sale of bourgeois newspapers on the streets of Moscow.

Replying to Ball, A.I. Mikoyan said, that so long as the arms race continues, it is impossible and unrealistic to demand the open society of which Ball spoke. You also do not have an open society. You have more advertising [reklam], but society is closed, but in its own way. When the arms race is eliminated and disarmament takes place, we will then open many places in which the presence today of foreigners is forbidden. Then we will have open exchanges and contacts.

Wishing to draw Heller, the Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, into the conversation (he appears pleasant, a relatively young professor, for the most part silent), A.I. Mikoyan asked Heller how he would explain the fact that, in particular, the USA has more steel producing potential than the USSR, but the USSR in the third quarter of this year produced more steel than the USA. "If you did not need so much steel, why build so many factories and remove huge amounts of capital from circulation, including the living work force [that has become] unemployed. In general, what measures are you taking to remove such disproportions and are they removable at all in a free enterprise system?"

Heller avoided answering by changing the topic of conversation, not wishing to enter an argument where he felt himself weak. A.I. Mikoyan in the context of the dinner did not insist on an answer.

Heller promptly supported Mikoyan's statement on the appropriateness of transferring power and means freed up by the end of the arms race toward raising the standard of living of the people from underdeveloped countries and of the people of the states participating in the arms race.

A.I. Mikoyan invited Heller to visit the Soviet Union.

Those present asked Mikoyan if, in his opinion, Castro is interested in normalizing relations and about Castro himself as the ruler of Cuba.

A.I. Mikoyan in his statements about his trip to Cuba underlined Cuba's interest in having the chance to build a [word illegible] life in a peaceful setting, and the lack of

any serious signs of readiness on the part of the USA to normalize [relations] with Cuba.

Dobrynin and Bubnov transcribed the conversation.

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