

October 22, 1962

**Carlos Lechuga, Record of contacts at the UN Cuban
Ambassador**

Citation:

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Summary:

Carlos Lechuga's record of contacts of the UN Cuban Ambassador from 22 October 1962 to 11 January 1963.

Credits:

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Original Language:

Spanish

Contents:

Translation - English

October 22 - Considered denouncing the United States for its blockade in the Security Council.[1]

24 - Arinos (Alfonso Arinos de Melo Franco, delegate from Brazil in the General Assembly) -- ambassador in Havana instructed [him] to take steps in favor of observers.

- Meeting in Washington with Latin Americans; we were told "You are with us or with Cuba."

26 - [Charles W.] Youst [sic; Yost] ([deputy] Ambassador of US delegation) with Latin Americans in UN. "Situation in United Nations; in the sea, good, but not in Cuba, where they continue work on the bases."

Arinos: Brazil and Mexico ready to support actions to prevent war - they propose suspension of USSR shipments and withdrawal of American ships. Later a general solution - not only for Cuba - with Brazilian proposal for denuclearization

- US threats might be to enable negotiating in better conditions for them.

- [UN Acting Secretary-General] U Thant: separate discussion. Quick fix, consisting of suspension of the blockade and shipment of arms. (USSR in agreement.) US wishes for suppression of arms and construction in Cuba and then they will lift the blockade. U Thant sees an opening for [Cuban President Osvaldo] Dorticós' appeal to negotiate. He wants guarantees and asks Cuba. This was said to [US UN Ambassador Adlai E.] Stevenson, who stated that he would consider it.

- U Thant's letter to Fidel [Castro]. Remember what U Thant said in the Security Council on the 24th [of October] about Dorticós' words concerning US guarantees about Cuba. He believes that would be on the right track. He is asking for suspension of medium and intermediate range ballistic missile plans in order to make a contribution to peace. He says that [the] US and USSR gave encouraging answers toward a peaceful solution.

27 - [Soviet UN Ambassador Valerian] Zorin and U Thant. U Thant stated: 1) Stevenson proposed inspection of ships on the high seas or in Cuban ports. Zorin said it was a matter for the Cuban government and that was a variation of U Thant's proposition. 2) That an agreement had come about on Soviet ships not advancing into the blockade zone and US not intercepting Soviet ships. 3) That Dorticós' words were a crucial point in the negotiations.

- It is said that Latin Americans will express to U Thant a) the necessity of negotiation, b) denuclearization of Latin America, c) observers in Cuba.

- U Thant said, concerning the inspection of ships, that Zorin had rejected it because it was against peace-time law and that verification in Cuba was an issue for Cuba and meant a capitulation on construction of bases and assembly of planes, and that the Soviet Union said no more were being made there. About Khrushchev's letter [to US President John F. Kennedy] referring to Cuba and Turkey, he confirmed that his reaction was positive. He said that their presence in Cuba would halt an invasion.

- [Mahmoud] Riad, [the ambassador] from the United Arab Republic [Egypt], said that the US insisted on the liquidation of the bases as a foundation for understanding and that they were prepared to give Cuba guarantees...Stevenson told him that observers were necessary but it would be preferable to the UN not only to have observers, but also a no-invasion guarantee.

28 - U Thant said that, during his stay in Cuba, "Radio Havana" lowered the pitch of its denunciations.

Journalist Donald Grant [of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch] said he had spoken with Clayton Fritchey, from the American mission [to the UN.] Fritchey said "that the policy of the CIA in Cuba had ended, that the letter from Kennedy to Khrushchev was the recognition of the social regime here; US would accept first four points and not the last for reasons of its own prestige, that they were ready to resume economic and diplomatic relations.

29 - Bulgarian Vice Minister of Foreign Relations told U Thant that Fidel's letter had matched up with that of Khrushchev.

- U Thant introduced the issue of verification on the high seas by the Red Cross, neutrals, or the UN, to the Soviets. The USSR accepted Red Cross verification under the following conditions: cessation of the blockade; verification taking place on Soviet or neutral ships. U Thant said it would be better in the destination port and that Soviets had said it was a matter for Cuba.

1 November: Chile, Venezuela, and Ireland (and permanent Western powers) will oppose a long-term solution in the Security Council. Ghana and the UAR [Egypt] have asked for instructions.

1 - [Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vasili V.] Kuznetsov says [Fidel Castro's] 5 points make a good base for negotiation.

2 - US will take USSR acceptance of inspection as a precedent for disarmament and pressure it to accept the Western plan.

2 - Kuznetsov: U Thant's idea was to propose a variation on inspection, considering not only Cuba but the entire Caribbean as an area of tension, and that UN troops would operate in the entire zone including the US. I suggest that to complicate the matter, some country should suggest inspection of Puerto Rico, Central America and the Panama Canal. Soviets do not have a clear idea on Council procedures.

2 - Arinos suggests that Cuba invite neutral ambassadors based in Havana, without prior warning, to resolve Cuba inspection issue. They would visit bases and after dismantling, make declarations in confirmation. He sees an advantage, that this would be the initiative of the Cuban government and not another from outside. He says this is his own idea and if it is accepted, he will convince Brazil to support it.

3 - Zorin explained to me that the idea of Red Cross inspection is not a Soviet one, but rather U Thant's; as U Thant and Kennedy said yesterday, that the US had proposed three alternatives, namely UN, neutrals, or Red Cross, and that they preferred the Red Cross. The three ideas were proposed by the US to U Thant.

3 - Winievoig? [Josef Winiewicz] Poland's Vice Minister of [Foreign Affairs] spoke with [US journalist] Walter Lippmann and said that at present direct conversations between Cuba and the US were difficult, but later on, through Latin American positive influence they would happen, and Dorticós' support was a good foundation. He called it the "Dorticós alternative."

3 - The impression [exists] that socialist countries were worried about war and that they still are.

3 - Danish Ambassador [Aage Hesselund-Jensen] informed me that his Government asked Cuba to reconsider the negative vote on UN inspection because it would damage U Thant's administration and that it was advisable to strengthen the UN for the defense of small countries. Urged Cuba to cooperate with the UN and said that UN intervention contributed to halting the crisis and it would be better to support the UN in future steps.

Nov. 4 - Irish Ambassador [Frederick H. Boland] said in conversation that he regarded as appropriate Cuba's demand that US counterrevolutionary activities be stopped and that this increased tensions in the Caribbean and incited militaristic hysteria in American public opinion.

5 - U Thant consults with countries for the Council session. Also awaits the return of [Anastas] Mikoyan.

5 - In interview with [former] president of the Red Cross [and Swiss UN ambassador, Paul Rüeegg], I was asked if Cuba accepted their inspections on the open seas. Said that US and USSR were in agreement and that our acceptance was missing. Agreed that Red Cross would select a group of inspectors from neutral countries and impartial people: that they would do inspections under the superior authority of the United Nations. Possibly they would use Swedish ships.

Nov. 7 - USSR mentions that inspection would be done within next five days. Impression in United Nations is that there is no time.

8-U Thant confidentially proposed that accredited Latin American ambassadors in Cuba be invited by our government to visit bases and later make an informal declaration. His idea is that the group would continue afterwards to serve as a link between Cuba and the UN for a permanent solution. He believes this is crucial in getting the US to give guarantees, lift the blockade, and suspend its flights. U Thant has written an unsigned letter about this, but awaits a reaction. Last night he told me that the USSR and US reached an agreement that warships from the US would inspect Soviet ships carrying missiles on the way to the Soviet Union.

8 - Communicated the Red Cross' answer. They will do no more inspection of Soviet ships going to Cuba. At the last minute, Red Cross said its constitution forbids carrying out inspection with its insignias and those of the UN would need to be used, because in practice they were the body doing the inspection.

Nov. 9 - Based on what Fidel told me, I will vote in favor of Brazil's motion. Socialists will do the same as us.

10 - Brazil asked me to study an amendment to the motion. This came about because I said we objected to the reference to verification for the connotation it has right now. Socialists agree as they always favor denuclearized zones and will make a similar area in Europe as a precedent. They tell me they accept control or verification because it can be no other way. I see as positive the negotiations among Latin American countries because a door is being opened.

10 - Zorin reports to me that in the last meeting with Americans, they insisted on inspection and avoided giving guarantees; upon proposing some demands containing the five points, McCloy said that the hand of Castro lurked in the background.

10 - Arinos told me that in a meeting in New York between the US and other NATO countries, they said the possibility for future negotiations with Cuba exists, as well as for the resumption of diplomatic and economic relations.

10 - Algeria's ambassador said his Government will accept inspection in the Caribbean and not only Cuba. (Recently, others have done the same.)

10 - I have the impression that the US insists on inspection and shies away from giving guarantees so that they strengthen their negotiating position. It is very difficult that they incite worsening of the crisis. After the elections, public tension will dissipate, and after the missiles are withdrawn, the US lacks political justification.[2] They seem to feel relieved by the agreement with the USSR. Every day their position in the UN is weaker as they try to win a political victory in this second stage.

10 - Regarding the Brazilian plan [for Latin American denuclearization], I understand that Puerto Rico and Panama must be mentioned specifically [as locations where the United States cannot possess nuclear weapons]. Zorin told me his observations that the prohibition on bomb transport equipment must not be accepted, because they might apply to the ILUSHIN-18 that are in Cuba. He also affirms that nuclear weapon states must guarantee not to use such weapons against Latin America since the US can do so from their bases. This is also in [Polish foreign minister Adam] Rapacki's plan for Central Europe.

10 - Letter from the president of Mali [Modibo Keita] to Fidel stating he proposed to solve the crisis 1) expulsion of Cuban refugees from the US who propose invasion by American personnel, 2) lifting of the blockade, 3) cessation of the transport of nuclear weapons to Cuba. US and Cuba should submit themselves to UN arbitration.

11 - UAR ambassador [Mahmoud Riad] says that a group of 45 countries that made appeal to U Thant never acted as such a group, and that the majority of them feared displeasing the United States; the appeal was aimed toward peace and not solidarity with Cuba. Almost all of them presently agree with inspection to various degrees. The group has disintegrated. Chanderly [not further identified] also confirmed this to me. However, they can continue to use it.

Nov. 11 - I passed on an answer to U Thant at his request. He told me of the difficult situation in which the Soviets found themselves due to Khrushchev's letter and the United States' insistence. U Thant now proposes the same but with countries from different geographic areas, almost all from the group of Belgrade [i.e., the Non-Aligned Movement], and neutrals. He did not mention countries but proposed Guinea and Ghana from Black Africa, Mexico and Brazil from Latin America, Austria and Sweden from Europe, and reminded me that Sweden is opposed to the blockade; Indonesia and India for Asia and the UAR [Egypt] from the Arab nations. He will send a letter to Fidel so that, should he maintain his rejection of the inspection, considering the idea that those countries offer their "good offices" for a permanent solution to be a meritorious one. Then U Thant would talk with the United States about the two letters. It occurred to me that the acceptance of "good offices" will serve to nourish 5 points propaganda. The letter from Kennedy to Khrushchev refers to missiles, and no subsequent solution. Until something positive has been achieved, the Council will not be convened. [But] if there is no agreement on the high seas and the blockade continues, they are considering calling the Council anyway.

Nov. 12 - U Thant letter (previous)

12 - U Thant brought to my attention that now there would be no inspection, but rather verification. I told him the effects were the same.

12 - Seeking joint interview with the USSR and us for U Thant to present him with a protocol. Kuznetsov had the idea that he and I would go to see the Americans tonight to present the plan, and I told him no.

13 - Interview with U Thant. I talked about the protocol in general terms. The Soviets made modifications and I too (smaller ones) and until Havana is aware of it, I will not present it formally. I asked Kuznetsov not to see the Americans until I received confirmation. USSR anxious to conclude this as soon as possible.

13 - Connected to modification of the protocol. Changes to Article 12 for U Thant.

13 - Explanation by U Thant of Article 12.

14 - About Kuznetsov and modification and my criterion, by which it was substantially altered.

16 - Stevenson reacted harshly to Fidel's declaration on flights over Cuba. He spoke of the absurdity that [Fidel?] would send a note in protest. Regarding the protocol he said it was unacceptable and stated that it contained the five points. Soviets said it was the basis for negotiation, Americans that they saw it as difficult. Zorin recalled that the Council had agreed on this after UAR and Ghana delegates had spoken.

16 - Modification of Brazil plan

17 - Arinos told me he would postpone voting on the plan.

17 - Kuznetsov with U Thant. U Thant told him that negotiations would be tripartite [i.e., US-Soviet-Cuban-ed.] through the UN. He spoke also on Article 12 of the protocol. U Thant said that he saw no problem in presenting his proposal on this issue if the parties could agree on eleven of the articles. He announced that he was developing a plan to create mobile verification groups for the UN, comprised of representatives of neutral countries approved by all parties. The headquarters would be in New York. Verification would occur in all places agreed on by the three parties. Each party would be able to send groups to determined locations on its own initiative, as would the Secretary General.

19 - [US negotiator John J.] McCloy's reaction on the protocol and other matters. (They suspended flights after Fidel's declaration, and also no more U2 [flights] going forward.)

19 - U Thant said that the president of the mobile groups will be a person of global stature accepted by all.

21 - U Thant gave me a letter for Fidel acknowledging receipt of his note from November 19. He noted that the Cuban government is prepared to withdraw its IL-28 bombers, and also that Cuba is open to a wide-ranging solution. U Thant expects to continue contact through me.

23 - To avoid the Council meeting and doing nothing, I suggested the possibility that U Thant give a boost to the idea of "good offices" with neutrals so that the matter stays within the auspices of the UN.

26 - US declaration plan.

26 - U Thant invited Mikoyan and the Soviets to dinner, and they asked that he also invite the Americans. Tomorrow I will have lunch with Mikoyan.

26 - I told U Thant that the Americans have said nothing about the documents that

the Soviets gave them. In the past few days negotiation has taken place between the USSR and US without participation by the UN. I told U Thant and the Soviets that it was very important that the UN not lose control. Today, I repeated this to U Thant. The Americans have two alternatives for the proceedings to continue in the Council. One is that each party makes a declaration and the President summarizes them. The other would be to not hold a session and send written documents then gather them in a dossier. The Americans submitted this idea to the Soviets. I asked U Thant if now there might be an opportunity to obtain a letter about the neutrals. He told me he would include it in his report.

Nov. 29 - Soviets trying to make a similar declaration with the Americans that contains minimum points. If they succeed, they will write a second one about the matters on which there is no agreement, supporting the 5 points.

Dec. 4 - I gave the Cuban declaration plan to U Thant in case there is agreement among the three parties.

5 - Soviets and Americans - two interviews. One six hours long with McCloy and Youst [Yost] and another last night with Stevenson. Nothing. I told K. to think about a date for the Council and that the topic was losing steam in public opinion. The Americans continue flights and don't promise anything. I told U Thant the same thing.

5 - About proceedings and differences.

7 - American modifications to the plan. Suppressed reference to the Treaty of Rio.

7 - Brazil will postpone the Latin American group meeting.

10 - USSR supports Cuban plan to read [to] Council.

13 - US will today present its joint declaration plan to the USSR on behalf of both countries.

19 - I asked U Thant to make an appeal in his letter with documents for the president of the Council and not consider the Caribbean crisis to be concluded. I told the Soviets to ask this of U Thant also.

19 - Americans have not accepted any procedure. They are waiting for Kennedy to return from the Bahamas [where he was meeting UK Prime Minister Harold Macmillan]. It is possible they will accept something, but will add other documents. McCloy told us that he did not wish for the USSR to send its letter from October 27, because Kennedy did not refer to it in his own letter.

3 January 1963 - Americans say if USSR sends letter from October 27 and 28 then they will send additional documents. New Soviet proposal is that US and USSR not send any documents [to the UN Security Council], but rather a letter. McCloy's observation in the letter was that the Caribbean area was mentioned, and not Cuba.

4 January - Americans accept Soviet proposition to send only one document and noted some modifications. McCloy submitted the modified document today.

5 January - Moscow accepted modifications.

7-US and USSR agree to send document tonight after 8 pm or tomorrow morning.

They will not go in person. We will wait but turn in ours in person. In my judgment they will send it because if they go alone they will have to (THERE ARE WORDS HERE THAT I CANNOT MAKE OUT. THEY ARE TWO SHORT WORDS) [in original-trans.[3]] and since Cuba is alone, it will go alone.

7-Documents will be submitted today [at] 5 pm and to propaganda at 8 pm.

10 - Very cordially, I explained to U Thant that his proposal concerning informal (or unofficial) invitation, besides being an abdication of our position on principle, is futile, since the Yankee government is inspecting Soviet ships, and it is known that the dismantling and packing have concluded, and they are now making their departures.

11- Government opposes inspection. It is auspicious that efforts will lead to permanent solution and in agreement that U Thant send confidential letter along the lines indicated. Even though they are opposed to returning planes, we have reached agreement with the USSR that demands an end to the blockade in exchange for their withdrawal.

[1] Ed. note: Mario Garcia-Inchaustegui was replaced as Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations by Carlos M. Lechuga, until then Havana's ambassador to Mexico, at the end of October 1962. On a cover page to this document there is a handwritten note reading, "Notes from Carlos Lechuga in a bookcase located in New York."

[2] Trans. note: My best estimate, as "cerece," a typographical error, resembles "carece" meaning to lack or fall short.

[3] Trans. note: This is part of the original text, in capital letters and in Spanish.