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Czechoslovak Ambassador to the United States (Dr. Miloslav Ruzek), Report on Anastas Mikoyan's Conversations in Washington

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Summary:

The report details Mikoyan's talks with President John F. Kennedy in Washington D.C. Among the topics of discussion were questions of hemispheres of influence, whether the Soviet Union promoted a revolution against the USA in Cuba, and whether Castro was made an enemy of the USA or was one from the beginning. Conduct of both nations with regards to the Cuban question is discussed at length, ranging from whether U.S. was correct in acting against a perceived threat to security, the conduct of the Cuban people, the extent of Soviet involvement in Cuba, and what military hardware would be left in Cuba after the removal of the nuclear missile bases.

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Dr M. Ruzek□
TOP SECRET!

Comrade A. Novotny
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Minutes of the communications of Deputy Chairman of the Ministers of the USSR A. I. Mikoyan at the dinner in the Soviet Embassy, 29 November 1962

Comrade Mikoyan discussed his stay in Cuba and his talks with US President J. Kennedy in Washington, on 29 November 1962, in which Ambassador Dobrynin also participated. During the conversation President Kennedy brought up the idea of a certain division of spheres, in the sense that the Western hemisphere should be considered the area of American influence and that the USSR should not interfere in the Western hemisphere. There followed a discussion on the question of supporting revolutions, where Kennedy and [US Secretary of State Dean] Rusk sought to show that the USSR supported revolutions against the USA. Comrade Mikoyan refuted this view and argued, using the example of Castro, in the sense that, after all, the USA had its representation abroad in Cuba, a monopoly of its affiliations, and many possibilities to influence the situation, and none of that helped. Fidel Castro had started out as a large estate owner, but developed into a socialist, not because of the support of the USSR but because of the development of socialist relations in Cuba. At this point Kennedy and Rusk disagreed, arguing that Castro was an enemy of the USA. Mikoyan pointed out that the USA itself had made Castro into an enemy of the USA (if one can even say that). The USA should try to understand the dynamics of the Cuban revolution and live with it in peace.

□Concerning the topical question of the Cuban situation Kennedy argued that the American intervention became necessary after weapons had been brought to the island, and stated that the USSR would not have been able to sleep either if the USA brought that sort of weapon to Finland. Mikoyan replied that the USA had its weapons in Turkey, which is even closer to Armenia than Finland is, and yet the Soviet political representatives sleep well because they are judicious people who know that these weapons are under American control, and that if the American top-level leadership gave the command for their use against the USSR, that would be suicidal for the USA.

Mikoyan argued that the USSR had made good on its obligations stemming from the exchange of letters between [Soviet Premier Nikita S.] Khrushchev and Kennedy, of 26-28 October 1962, and that it was therefore up to the USA to make good on its remaining obligations - namely, to give formal guarantees that it would not attack Cuba. Kennedy and Rusk argued that the USSR had not made good on its obligations to allow spot checks and to introduce controls against the redeployment of offensive weapons in Cuba, and that therefore the USA could not give formal guarantees. Mikoyan argued in response that Khrushchev, when he had reached an agreement with Kennedy, could understandably commit himself only in so far as it concerned Soviet property - namely, missiles and IL-28 aircraft - and not in the matter of inspection on Cuban territory, where the Cuban government has jurisdiction and does not want to permit inspection. The USSR therefore offered inspection carried out on the open seas, without allowing inspectors on Soviet territory, that is to say, on deck, and that had been agreed to even before Mikoyan's departure for Cuba. Kennedy and Rusk, nevertheless, stuck to their position, which they further argued by saying that guarantees against the re-deployment of offensive weapons in Cuba were necessary because China, too, could send similar weapons there in two or three years.

The question of the violation of Cuban airspace by over-flights of American aircraft and the question of bases on foreign territory were also discussed. Mikoyan protested against continuing over-flights over Cuban territory by American aircraft, and stated,

among other things, that these over-flights were not necessary even for technical reasons, because considering the small width of the island of Cuba, the zone containing the whole territory of Cuba could be photographed from positions above the open seas. (This was confirmed to Mikoyan by John McCloy in New York.) Kennedy and Rusk defended the necessity of over-flights with the necessity of checking the dismantling of the IL-28s, and at the same time pointed out an article in the New York Daily Mirror, where it said that nuclear weapons in Cuba were concealed in caves. Mikoyan brushed off this argument with a joke, saying that articles like that were intended for idiots. During the discussion on bases in foreign territory Kennedy stated that their bases in Turkey and elsewhere in Europe were becoming less important, and that they were planning to close them down.

Apart from the Cuban case, Kennedy mentioned Laos, but Mikoyan was not prepared to discuss the matter. Other international problems, for example Berlin, Germany, and the like, were not discussed.

Concerning the experiences from his stay in Cuba, Mikoyan reported that the orders from the Central Committee of the CPSU were along the lines that no pressure was to be exerted on Castro. Considering the Cubans complained that Mikoyan had not sufficiently defended their interests in New York (they believed the American press), Mikoyan made a statement to the press before leaving for Havana, in which he supported the five Cuban points. Castro appreciated that very much, especially because it was done back in the USA and not after arriving in Cuba. From the beginning Castro rejected talks with the USA and the efforts to obtain guarantees against invasion, arguing that weapons were a better guarantee for them and that it was impossible to set great store by American guarantees. He insisted on the five-point program, and did not even want to go to welcome Mikoyan at the airport. When, however, the agencies carried the news about Mikoyan making the statement in New York before his departure, Castro decided to go to the airport after all; [Cuban President Osvaldo] Dorticos, however, did not go, which is, anyway, within protocol, because it was unnecessary for the head of state to be at the airport. During his departure, both Castro and Dorticos were at the airport.

After the withdrawal of the missiles the Cubans are left with three kinds of MIG-namely, the MIG 17, 19, and 21-as well as defensive missiles. According to Comrade Mikoyan, the American U-2 aircraft piloted by Major [Rudolf] Anderson had been shot down by a Soviet crew. There had also been other operations against American aircraft.

The population of Cuba behaved very well, and everything was flawless in the area of military measures. Economically there are many problems, but the harvest will be better. Intensive activity had been undertaken by the Chinese; they had organized blood donations, sent resolutions, etc. This activity, however, has had no influence on the leadership of Cuba. Before his departure, Khrushchev was told by Castro that Cuba was with the USSR and would continue to be with it. In this connection Mikoyan reiterated some of the arguments that he had used in discussions with Cuban representatives, concerning the pseudo-revolutionary `positions' of the Chinese. The Chinese are very active in the use of revolutionary clichés, but have done virtually nothing useful for Cuba. Soviet garrisons were in Cuba, and if it came to a fight, they would give their lives, and not just give blood in a clinic. Instead of attacking Macao or Hong Kong and thus complicating the relationship of the USA with her allies Portugal and Britain, the People's Republic of China had attacked India, a neutral country, and was trying to enter into friendly relations with Pakistan, a member of an aggressive pact. Even in carrying out her policies in Tibet, the People's Republic of China had made a lot of blunders, mainly in assuming that it was enough to have an agreement with the leading figures of the Lama system; ultimately the shortcomings had become evident, which the Chinese did not want to admit. Comrade Mikoyan compared the behavior of the Chinese during the Cuban crisis with the behavior of the ultra--left during the Peace of Brest-Litovsk in World War I, when Lenin had to

defend a sober approach to the situation against the cliché-mongers. The USSR explained to the People's Republic of China that it would be better if India received arms from socialist countries, and it would, in fact, thus be possible to influence her in the event of international difficulties, rather than from capitalist countries. The Chinese do not want to understand that, and it was now coming about that [former Indian Defense Minister] Krishna Menon's position has practically been wiped out, while the position of the right-wingers, such as [Indian Finance Minister] Morarji Desai, had been strengthened, and the situation of the [Communist] Party in India had been made difficult. At the same time, Mikoyan stated that the delivery of Soviet MIG--21 aircraft to India, which was being written about a great deal in the press, depended on the concrete situation at the time they were to be delivered, in December 1962.

The Cubans value in particular the attitude of Brazil and of President [João] Goulart personally, who sent his own envoy to explain the position of Brazil. Mexico had been placed under pressure by the USA, and they submitted to that pressure. Another country with a positive approach to Cuba was Chile. Mikoyan further reported that the American communiqué that had been noted in the press after his conversation with Kennedy had been prepared by the USA at Mikoyan's request; he had asked Kennedy for them to prepare a communiqué in view of the fact that they were more familiar with the American press.

During the conversation Kennedy, using the same domestic-political reasons, explained his reluctance to issue a formal statement against the invasion of Cuba. In this, he reiterated his earlier statements that the USA had not intended to attack Cuba and that they had been concerned only with offensive weapons. In this sense, Mikoyan also said that Kennedy's statement at the press conference of 20 November 1962 had been discussed beforehand in correspondence between Khrushchev and Kennedy.

Mikoyan also replied to our questions on the situation in Cuba, particularly concerning the situation in industry and agriculture.

Washington, 30 November 1962